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YEA AND NAY

YEA AND NAY

*A Series of Lectures and Counter-Lectures
given at the London School of Economics
in aid of the Hospitals of London*

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MR. C. DAVID STELLING, to whose imagination and initiative as a Member of the Organizing Committee, the success of this novel scheme of "Lectures and Counter-Lectures" is largely due, has added to the Committee's indebtedness to him by preparing this volume for publication on their behalf.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN !

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

This is an unusual book. To describe its contents as essays would be untrue—as lectures misleading—as dramas questionable. Yet, if there is any meaning in the term “drama of ideas” (as though the Athenians and Shakespeare were wanting in ideas !) the series of contests staged in this volume could hardly be better entitled. In the whole Shavian theatre is there anything more dramatic than the conflict—graced by the presence of the legendary Queen of the Fairies, Ellen Terry herself—between the Goliath of the Commercial Theatre and the David of dramatic criticism. And has even Mr. Cochran produced a more theatrically effective scene than that duel in which two of the outstanding women writers of the day, vying with one another in nimbleness of wit as in beauty of diction and charm of person, fought for the freedom of the Novel.

But the protagonists belonged to real life, spoke their own thoughts, fought their own fight, not that of some dramatic propagandist. So that perhaps even the term “drama” would do them less than justice, and it would be best, after all, to fall back upon the cumbersome phrase of the programme—“Lectures and Counter-Lectures.” It is no mere quibbling distinction that we seek, ladies and gentlemen. The name is of importance, for the name explains the style, and an understanding of the style is essential if you would enjoy the full

flavour of these attractive discourses. Did you, for example, curl up in your arm-chair to read them as essays, you would ere long be horrified at a certain want of gravity, an unrestrained spontaneity ill-becoming the dignity of an essayist. Or you might savour them as speeches, licking your lips in foretaste of a Ciceronian or a Gladstonian oration. Again you would feel yourself cheated. For there is a mighty difference between our speakers and the orators. These wrote with one eye on their hearers and the other on their readers. Our speakers spoke for the most part extempore, only in rare cases even using notes, and had quite certainly not the remotest thought of publication. They spoke to the occasion, and the occasion was peculiar.

The programme represented an attempt on the part of a small committee, working on behalf of the Hospitals of London, to offer to the public a new form of intellectual entertainment. Mere oratory could be had too cheaply from the platform, the pulpit or Parliament to be a saleable commodity. Wisdom, wit and humour were purchasable from a penny upwards in periodicals, or might be borrowed at an even smaller cost from the libraries. Lantern Lectures were too self-consciously self-culture. . . . And so gradually was evolved the idea of the Counter-Lecture. All experience had proved—did not Aristotle record as much several civilizations ago!—that whether in the theatre, at a bargain sale, at Lord's or at Olympia, the public dearly loves a fight.

So it came about that London was paraded one day last spring by sandwichmen announcing WELLS v. OSBORN at the London School of Economics. Hundreds of people—many, no doubt, in the hope

of assisting at a glove-fight—flocked to the hinterland of Aldwych and almost overwhelmed the amateur seat-selling staff, which had not dared to anticipate a *succès* so *fou*. When Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, detained by a division in the Commons, rushed into the crowded and impatient hall, he found himself confronted by an audience agog with expectation. The atmosphere was that of a “first night”—a new season at the Old Vic, or the return of Pavlova. It was in such an environment that Mr. H. G. Wells rose and spoke—spoke *not* lectured—about his idea of the way in which history should be taught. He may have known beforehand what he intended to say, but what he said—and the way he said it—was certainly governed by the people in front of him and by his adversary on the other side of the table. His reaction to his hearers gave a colour to his thoughts and his expression of them. It was the difference between literary dialogue and dramatic dialogue, between a flower show and a flower garden. . . . The success of the series was assured.

The flavour of the spoken word cannot be preserved in print. Impossible even to suggest—unless one embarked on a species of elaborate stage-directions—the glance, the tone, the expression. But it is still possible, by retaining the style of the spoken word, to indicate the vital personality behind the words you are reading, and, with your imaginative co-operation, to make you a member of the audience. It will be worth your imagination’s while to listen to this book rather than read it, just as you listen to your Boswell instead of reading “Lives of the Poets.” To help you, the text has been sprinkled with parenthetical records of *Cheers*

or *Laughter*. Do not suppose that there was no laughter save where these parentheses occur, still less that the lecturers stirred no emotion save that which expresses itself in audible cachinnation. Regard that recurring parenthesis rather as an intermittent reminder of the audience at your side.

This volume owes its existence to the generosity of the ladies and gentlemen who not only gave their services as lecturers or chairmen but have permitted their speeches to be published for the benefit of the same cause—the Hospitals of London. The volume will be found the poorer for the absence of the counter-lectures by Mr. Sinclair Lewis and Mr. Alfred Noyes.

Finally, an announcement. It is hoped to arrange, for the same charitable purpose, another series of Lectures and Counter-Lectures in the early months of next year. If any of you are interested, will you send a post card to the London School of Economics, asking for particulars to be forwarded in due course.

Ladies and Gentlemen, meet the lecturers.

C.D.S.

September, 1923.

LECTURE I

Should History be Taught on a National or an International Basis ?

MR. H. G. WELLS

MR. E. B. OSBORN

Chairman : RT. HON. H. A. L. FISHER, M.P.

MR. H. A. L. FISHER, M.P. : We are gathered together to listen to an intellectual duel between two distinguished gentlemen who take opposite views of a great educational question. Mr. Wells appears as "the orator of the whole human race," Mr. Osborn as the fervent protagonist of insular nationalism. At this stage of the proceedings wild horses will not extract from me an indication as to my own personal predilections or prejudices, but later on, when the tourney has run its course, an audience drunk with intellectual pleasure may be condemned to listen to a few soothing observations from the Chairman (applause).

MR. H. G. WELLS : My thesis is that history is, not many subjects, but one, and should be taught in the same terms in all civilized countries, and that it is best taught in that fashion. It is as reasonable to teach it in closed packets, as is done now, as to teach chemistry or biology in that manner. It is as unreasonable to have such subjects as English

history or French history as to have English chemistry, or French biology, or German mineralogy. I advocate the teaching of world history as distinct from national history, because it is more interesting, easier to teach, and more readily understood.

Let me first remind you of the kind of history teaching under which most of us present suffered in our youth. The history I was taught at school began abruptly with the Britons in Britain. I was never told how they got there or anything about them except that they stained themselves with woad. So that my first impression of the Britons was that they were True Blue Tories. I was told that they made Stonehenge and carried on a sort of religion under the auspices of a priesthood of Father Christmases called Druids. I found afterwards that all that was nonsense, and that I had learned nothing about Avebury, or of the people who made the wonderful lake villages discovered at Glastonbury, or of the long past of our race, although even in England there is abundant evidence of the romantic beginning of the human story. I learned that the Phœnicians called these islands the tin islands, but who these Phœnicians were did not seem to matter.

Into this spectacle of blue Britons with tin linings came Julius Cæsar, of whom I thought I had heard in my Scripture lessons, not knowing that it was not the same Cæsar. Cæsar came from a place called Rome, of which I had also heard in church. Cæsar came and went, and I gathered that he said he conquered—but when he went he left English history blank for nearly a century. Then the Romans came back in force, and the woad-soaked Britons became bleached. There was a great coming and going of Romans—agitated

Emperors appeared, built walls, and hurried off, and at last the noise of barbarians was heard without, and *exeunt* the Romans. Evidently something very important was happening among them, off stage, but what it was I never learnt.

Then from that unknown outer darkness came Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Picts and Scots, making a tremendous din. In that din the Romans reappeared, marvellously changed. Rome was now the seat of a personage called the Pope, who was a spouting fountain of missionaries and clergy, and the English were Christianized. After that all that was left in my memory for a long period was the smell of burning cakes (laughter).

The Danes vanished in the twinkling of an eye, and the Normans took their place—William the Conqueror, 1066. As soon as the Normans had settled down to their cruelties and tyranny something called the Crusades occurred. I had the impression that a person called Saladin had taken the Holy Sepulchre from the Christians—whereas it had been in the hands of the Mahommedans before the days of King Alfred—and that these Crusades were to recover it. Thy petered out presently—off stage as usual (laughter).

Then began the French wars, and I was taught minute details about the claims of the English kings to the crown of France, and formed a picture of the Middle Ages, of knights in armour, ladies in fantastic dresses presiding over tourneys, troubadours, monks, nuns, famines and nice little pestilences—Merrie England. I never even heard of the Mongol and Turkish conquests in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries until somebody rushed into English history with the alarming

information that the Turks had captured Constantinople. Then suddenly came the Renaissance and Reformation without notice or understanding, just as though some outer power had flung a large rich egg across the picture of Merrie England, and there was nothing to do but to smear it off and begin a new picture. So my history of England went on, a tale of fag ends, a story in which nothing fairly began or fairly ended. You see it was only the story of a single room in the busy mansion of mankind, and until the ocean-going ship arrived our England had not a very important place in that story.

It is impossible to understand history unless it is put on a wider basis. How much wider? European? That is not enough. Even the old world history is not enough. The only way to understand the history of any particular country is to place it in its proper position as a part of the general history of mankind. It may be objected that to teach even English history properly takes time, and that it would take much more time to teach the history of the world. The whole is greater than the part, but it is often simpler and more readily understood. Supposing one wanted to teach a child about a clock, would it be simpler to give him a minute hand and a cog or two, or the whole clock? If one wished to teach a child to read, would one begin with the first ten letters because the whole alphabet would be too complicated?

We should teach history by beginning with the dawn of life on this globe and going on with the development of the human race, the growth of States, Governments, and civilisations, the results



Camera Portrait by E. O. HOPPE

Mr. H. G. WELLS

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of iron weapons, the coming of the horse, the change from picture writing to real writing, the effect on mankind of coined money, and the various stages of development of greater and greater human communities. I hold that this is really a simpler and easier story than to take a little corner of the world and go on with the collection of the fag-ends of which its history consists. The matter has become an urgent political necessity, because the nations of Europe to-day are suffocating and festering in pits of stale, unventilated history.

International relationship has been revolutionized in the last hundred years by the increased facilities of transport and communication, the enormous increase of productive power, and the vast addition to the destructive side of war, without any increase in its decisiveness. Our world is becoming, through invention and in spite of every obstacle, one economic and financial system, and some sort of mutual control and concession is an urgent need. What is nationality? It is not a common language or common religion or common economic need or even a common complexion, but a common historical idea that holds nationalities together. Nations are bound by history, and the only possibility for a wider and saner arrangement of human affairs lies in a wider and saner vision of one nation and people in relation to the whole adventure of mankind (prolonged applause).

MR. E. B. OSBORN : It is well, I think, for each party to a public disputation to begin by some act of courtesy to his opponent—something in the nature of the grand salute which is the prelude to a fencing bout. Let me say then that Mr. Wells

has always been one of my favourite authors. I have read and re-read many of his books ; and I could never make up my mind as to which of his two kinds of romance gave me the greater pleasure and profit—the novels of advanced science, such as “The Time Machine” and “The War of the Worlds,” or his stories of simple, lovable, fantastic human nature, such as “Kipps” and “Love and Mr. Lewisham.” These four are named because each of them came on me as a fresh entrancing revelation of a new way of looking at things and people, a new kind of wit and wisdom, a new kind of humour. Perhaps his scientific stories have most thrilled me—probably because my favourite study at school was mathematics, especially astronomy. I liked to remember there was a link between us : we were both in our way disciples of the late William Ernest Henley, a man of letters at whom you could warm yourself, like at a fire.

Well, can I remember the beginning of his first story of scientific wonderment in the *National Observer* ? There was a word-picture of flying through time—faster and faster—till sun and moon were seen as circles of light in a blue, unchanging sky—which set me thinking whoever wrote that ! Later on when Henley was deposed from the editorship of the *National Observer*, I had occasion to see his successor—one of those men of taste who are always the enemies of genius—and he told me he was going to improve the journal in several ways, because some of the articles had been in bad taste and others sheer lunacy. “There’s one lunatic,” he said, “who thinks you can invent a bicycle to ride through time. I am not having any more of that sort of thing.” I expostulated, but in

vain. Not long after "The Time Machine" appeared in book form, and every sound judge of good literature knew that a new genius had arrived.

Well, you may be sure I looked out for the next of that young author's scientific novels. The next—"The War of the Worlds," which describes, as you know, the invasion of our planet by the Martians, vast unsympathetic minds in devil-fish bodies with terrible fighting machines—appeared in the magazines, while I was ranching in West Canada. It was published serially, with exciting illustrations, in *The Cosmopolitan*, an American magazine with a colossal circulation. When the next number was due, we used to send a man riding into the nearest town, sixty miles there and sixty miles back, to get it. He too caught the infection, and when he arrived with the last number he could not help telling us about the extraordinary way in which the Martians had been defeated.

"Gee! boys," he said. "What do you think has happened? The hull fighting outfit o' the goldarned Martians has been wiped out by orn'ry little germs and backilli" (laughter).

Well, the salute's at an end now! I am sorry to say that Mr. Wells's theory of what history is and should be seems utterly unsound—demonstrably so. And the new prophecies which he has mingled with it seem to me just as illogical and opposed to the plain object-lessons of history. There is one point, however, which seems to be commendable in his argument. Mr. Wells is convinced, as no doubt our chairman is, that everybody ought to learn some kind of history. There is nothing which more marks us as a half-educated people than the general ignorance of the most elementary facts of

history—our own and that of the peoples which have most influenced Western Europe. I could give scores of examples—not only from the man in the street but also from the man at the club window. Here is a story sent to me the other day—absolutely authentic. Towards the close of the Palestine campaign a trooper wrote to his wife telling her, among other items of news, that he had just watered his horse at the Holy Well at Beer Sheba, which, she would remember, was the place where Moses slew Abraham with a stone from a sling. The story came into my informant's possession who tried it on the Sergeant-Major. He solemnly considered it and said : " Well, sir, that is most interesting. Why the country must go right back to Bible times ! " Now to come to the serious issue. History from the national or international standpoint?—it seems to me that Mr. Wells's theory is inspired by the wish to make war impossible, or at any rate less probable, by ceasing to foster national sentiment in schools and colleges. It is a by-product of one of those periods of disillusionment which invariably follow an era of world-warfare. We have come out on the victorious side in a great war at a tremendous cost in blood and treasure, and we seem to have nothing to show for all our sacrifices—except myriads of wrecked families, unpaid bills, a lower standard of living, and perhaps of morality. A young generation has been destroyed ; the joy has gone out of the spring-tide, as Pericles felt in the Athenian prime, because the faces of those young men are seen no more. It is true that we *had* to fight ; that we fought, not for any material gain, but for the right to remain Englishmen. There can be no doubt about that ;

if we had been beaten, if Germany had occupied this island, the process of bleeding us white in the material sense would have been a small thing in comparison with the spiritual humiliation we should have suffered. When, if ever, the invaders departed, we should not have dared to look one another in the face. To-day the Germans are so meek and mild, so respectable and respectful, that is hard for anybody to realize that their former threats were seriously intended. Yet, if we go to the historians—to the French historians who can tell you what Germans did in their country in Blucher's time, in 1870-1871, in the regions they occupied and wrecked after 1914, we can guess what their victory would have meant to us islanders.

But it is hard indeed to realize that our escape has been well worth the price we paid for it. So the right to go on being English—as English, say, as Mr. Wells, who looks to me as characteristically English as a cricket ball or beer in a pewter pot, or the Easton meadows or the Dunmow Flitch—seems to many Englishmen a sorry boon, and some of them want to stop the teaching of English history or any other direct or indirect incentive to the horrid vice of the bourgeoisie called patriotism, and adopt instead some form of internationalised history such as has been the subject of Mr. Wells's discourse. The curious thing is these internationalists, while looking upon English nationalism as a deadly sin, insist that all other peoples and languages have a right to their national sentiment. Ireland, a nation ; Egypt, a nation ; India, a nation ; Latvia and Esthonia, nations ; Irak, a nation ; Zion, a nation—any race or country has a right to its national sentiment, its national history, except poor old

England. Her only privilege is to help all the other nations to pay their way. For them the red flesh and fiery wine of nationalism—for us the skim milk and Quaker Oats of internationalism.

However, all this will pass with the flowing out of time ! Look back through modern history and you will notice that the great war-epochs occur at intervals of fifty or sixty years ; long enough for the memory of the horrors and disillusionment of the previous one to have faded out. Go back fifty or sixty years from 1914 and you get a war epoch culminating in the Franco-Prussian war—go back another similar period and you are in the midst of the Napoleonic world-struggle—go back yet another interval and we are fighting France for her colonies all over the world. A fourth journey through time and Marlborough is winning his battles. And so on. There was a similar gap of time between the war of Greece against the Mede and the Peloponnesian war, and, at the outbreak of the latter struggle, national warfare complicated with class warfare, Thucydides tells us that all Greece was standing on tiptoe with excitement, wondering what war was like and regarding it, no doubt, as a wondrous adventure. Fifty or sixty years hence the beautiful day-dreams of eternal peace by means of internationalized history, etc., will have vanished and man will once more be a fighting animal, unafraid and unabashed. That is a most unpopular idea—like so many of history's object lessons ! But then, you see, man has been a fighter for a million years or more ; if it had not been so I and Mr. Wells would still be amphibious mudfish leading an amphibious life between high-tide and low-tide marks, or, at best, green-whiskered monkeys,

living on greenstuff in green tree tops. I should be a cheerful chimpanzee and Mr. Wells a gibbon, writing his "Outline of History" with a prehensile tail (laughter).

After all, it is the fighting races—Israel, Greece, Rome, France, England—which have brought about the progress of mankind. There are in the East races sunk in profound peace in the shadow of their ancient cosmogonies, vast as the Himalayas and white with the snows of eternal meditation. Their prayer is for Nirvana—annihilation; a release from the iron revolving cage of human necessities. But what have they done for mankind?

Time then, as I think, will confute Mr. Wells's plan for destroying national sentiment by stopping the study of history from the national standpoint. But it is also possible, I believe, to show that his whole conception of internationalized history is based on false analogy and a fallacious materialism. I can only indicate the lines of a criticism which would have to be filled out to be effective.

In the first place, he would have us to believe that history can be a science—like chemistry or physics. It is not so; if only because you cannot conduct experiments with the peoples of the past. The truth is that history is an art, not a science. Brunetière defined it as the art of living in ages gone by; Anatole France points out that we can only build our dreams in the past, in history's domain, because the future is closed against us and the present is but a knife edge on which we have hardly room to stand at ease.

All the great history books are works of deliberate artistry, expressing in some way the heart's desire of the historian. Herodotus made his story of the

war with the Mede an epic suitable for recitation at the Olympic games. Thucydides made history a tragical drama of the downfall through *ὑβρις*—overweening pride and self-confidence—of the mistress-city who cast him out, whom he loathed and loved. Livy wrote the history of Rome as a glorious pageant—an age-long triumph winding up the hill of time towards the gleaming Capitol of world conquest. Tacitus shows us the murder of Roman liberties by revolutionary emperors in a series of lightning flashes. Macaulay's history is a Whig pamphlet just as J. R. Green's is a manifesto of Liberalism. Mommsen's history of Rome is really his dream of a future Germany. . . . Then there is a host of scientific historians, whose pictures of the past are like huge dust-heaps and further from a living reality than any other type of history. They take an ancient book and reduce it to a mass of infinitesimal facts which they sift and sort into parcels. They remind me of my old Fourth Form master who once gave me this task as an imposition : "Write a hundred facts about Jesus Christ." In accumulating the dust of circumstance they destroy the greatest fact of all—the living book with its language of such earnestness and vivid exactitude. Mr. Wells with his glorious gift of imagination is incapable of such dry-as-dust work. And his "Outline of History" is the most beguiling bit of Socialist propaganda I know of.

Secondly, Mr. Wells bases all his prophetic histories on a fallacious materialism. All his scientific prophecies, which aim at giving us glimpses of a future world, show us new, strange mechanisms at work. He certainly in these books lives up to Lassalle's saying that Science and

Socialism will be the salvation of mankind. As Disraeli was on the side of the angels, Mr. Wells is on the side of the aeroplanes. He is horribly perturbed about these machines ; he seems to think them superhuman and unconquerable, forgetting that—after all—a man is their sole principle of vitality. It is the airman, not the aeroplane, that really matters—an idea that I tried to bring out in the following stanza from a poem in praise of our incomparable Flying Force :

Then did the British airman's sea-born skill
Teach wood and iron to obey his will ;
In every cog and joint his spirit stirred ;
The Thing possessed was man as well as bird.

In war, aeroplanes and airships will not be the unspeakable terror feared by Mr. Wells and other alarmists. As in the case of the German submarines, means will be found to check their activity. Aerial equivalents of the paravane and depth charge will be discovered ; anti-aircraft artillery will be perfected.

An outcry of this kind has always followed the invention of a new weapon of war. It was so when cannon was invented and when the ironclad appeared. Civilians are generally responsible for these outcries ; not the soldiers who know the truth of Napoleon's saying, that war is three parts a question of *moral*. I don't suppose any war between civilized nations was ever won by mere superiority of weapons. As for the notion that improved means of transport will necessitate a World State, there is nothing new in that. When railways began to be built on a large scale, Hudson, the "Railway King," and many others, thought

they would in the end lead to the abolition of international boundary lines. It did not happen, and it would seem to follow from such historical object-lessons that the development of aviation is not going to make the map of the world all one colour. It is ideas, not mechanical inventions, which, in Marvell's words, "cast the kingdoms old into another mould."

Believing as I do, that war is deeply rooted in the nature of man and that the study of history from the national standpoint helps to strengthen the *moral* of a nation, I am compelled to oppose Mr. Wells in this matter. All the same I do not object to teaching history to advanced pupils in such a way that they may learn to understand the aspirations of other nations. After all, our English nationalism is a kindly and tolerant sentiment; it was never like the Prussian variety with his two deadly axioms: "I am It" and "My nation your damnation." That expansion of England known as our Empire stands for equity as Rome stood for law; wherever its power has penetrated, the religions and intimate customs of weaker races have been carefully safeguarded. Perhaps we have shown the Cross—but never in the shape of a sword hilt! And in carrying out our traditional policy, vital to our existence, of preserving the balance of power in Europe we have greatly served the cause of civilization. Again and again we have used our sea power to break the might of those who wished to create a European empire on Roman lines. Thanks to England more than to any other factor in world politics, Europe remains a wondrous mosaic of national cultures, a spectacle of the infinite variety of power and beauty of human

nature in its grandest growth. And, thanks to England first and last, the New World was made a peaceful sphere for old-world emigration in which :

The nations old on earth
Come to a second birth.

—and learn a unity which is a very negation of the dull and dreary uniformity of Wellsian world states.

In conclusion, one or two ideas as to the teaching of English history. (1) History should begin at home—in the family. Children should know and take a pride in their family past. I don't know what Labour with a big, big L is, but I have had many close friendships with labouring folk. And I have always found they know more about their ancestors than, say, the middle-class man who is rich enough to buy a baronetcy from his party and a pedigree to go with it. I remember, for example, a family of hop-pickers in Kent who had an old family Bible with them. The entries in it went back 250 years.

(2) Schools should get up the history of the locality in which they are situated. There are more antiquities—curious and significant survivals—to the square mile in England than in any other country. I remember this quest and cult of local history being carried out by a school in Hackney many years ago when I was staying at Toynbee Hall. Hackney at first sight was not a very likely environment, but any amount of historical romance was dug up. The story of the chief local industry should also be studied ; as a rule it goes back for centuries. Anything to foster local patriotism which is the basis of civic pride and municipal well-doing ! Even the history of the local League

clubs whose matches are not eleven-aside affairs, but twenty or thirty thousand aside.

(3) Having in this way been taught that history is not mere book talk but as real as it is romantic, the nation's children—our masters that are to be—could go on to the history of England in the narrow seas and beyond them. And then—well, I could wish that they might all learn something of the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome, for all the vital object-lessons history can offer us are found in those shining pages. The ancient Greeks were much more like than unlike us ; the strange similarity once moved me to write :

I deem the Englishman a Greek grown old,
Deep waters crossed and many a watch-fire cold.

They were tolerant as we were, and, in the youth of the western world, knew that all things pass away and are yet renewed. From such sayings as that of Nicias—"And men, having done what they could, endured what they must"—we learn a wise humility and also the secret of the unconquerable soul of man (applause).

MR. H. A. L. FISHER, M.P. : I must convey the thanks of the audience to the protagonists in this gladiatorial contest for their brilliant display of wit, humour and ripe knowledge. I think we would all agree with Mr. Wells that a great deal of the teaching of history in the past has been very bad, very unenlightened, and very unintelligible. What do we want history for ? First, to give us an intelligent view of the world in which we live ; secondly, as an influence in the formation of character ; and, thirdly, as a discipline for the training of judg-

ment. In order to give an intelligent view of history we must have a view of the world's history. If I had the historical training of a child, I should introduce him to the cave-men at the age of 5, and, after a glimpse at the Babylonians, Arabians, Egyptians and Jews, proceed to the heroes of Greece and Rome, until, about the end of the tenth year, I had arrived at the period of Julius Cæsar, carrying through the scheme in a broad and general outline, and, for the later centuries, giving England its proper place in the general context of circumstances. We could then specialize on this or that period of national or local history. The teaching of history hitherto—though not perhaps in the most recent years—has been too exclusively political and military ; we are now beginning to attend more to social and economic developments, but have still to find a place for the great men of science. Boys and girls should have their attention directed to the history of scientific discovery and should know the names and achievements of great leaders of scientific research.

While to this extent I am at one with Mr. Wells, I do not share his sanguine view as to the political results which are likely to ensue from the adoption of a common historical textbook by the nations of the world. For centuries there has been such a textbook, widely read and widely revered, indeed endowed with a sacred character, among the most progressive races of the earth. There has been the Bible. But the doctrine of human progress contained in the Book of Daniel and accepted as the authentic revelation of God's purpose on earth, has not prevented wars. Indeed it is a melancholy fact that the nations among whom the sacred books

of Christianity have been most ardently accepted have also been most prone to quarrel. I cannot, therefore, feel confident that, where the Bible has failed, another book, making a more modest pretension, will succeed.

VISCOUNT BURNHAM : As Chairman of the Education Auxiliary Committee, I wish to move a vote of thanks to Mr. Fisher for so kindly coming here from the House of Commons this evening, and I am sure it will be most warmly accorded to him. May I add it is rather interesting to think that at this moment no one can properly appreciate what is called the Ruhr question unless they have read his admirable volume on the Napoleonic regime in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century. I also wish to take the opportunity of saying one word as to the programme of lectures. This is the first of the series, and I need say no more as to its absorbing interest and attraction. It is an experiment in aid of the great cause about which I need not speak. I hope most sincerely that you will enable us to add still further to what has been the most successful part of the Hospitals of London Appeal—that which has been undertaken by the teachers and children, not only of the Administrative County of London, but of Greater London, and who, by helping the hospitals, are benefiting the people of the whole Empire. I ask you to give a hearty round of applause for Mr. Fisher.

LECTURE II

“Is there any Alternative to the
Sex Novel ?”

MISS SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

MISS REBECCA WEST

Chairman : MR. J. C. SQUIRE

MR. J. C. SQUIRE : Ladies and Gentlemen, It is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you, or rather they need no introduction, Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith and Miss Rebecca West, who are to discuss the sentence, “Is there any alternative to the Sex Novel ?” The sentence, as you will observe, is framed in a somewhat comprehensive way. I do not think it would pass a strict logician. The man of literal mind faced with that sentence might very well say there were many alternatives to the sex novel. For instance, you might say, Come and have a drink. Even if it were further limited and were framed, “Is there any alternative form of literature to the sex novel ?” it is perfectly obvious that there are alternatives, and that if a man prefers to read the Chinese Encyclopædia he can do so. Further, it is not made quite clear what is meant by the phrase “sex novel.” If it be suggested that there is a type of novel which omits the sexes (laughter)—

I can only say that I have not come across it. If there be a type of novel which only mentions one sex, I think that is almost equally rare. We all know novels in which the relations of the sexes play a comparatively small part, but we almost all of us expect that even in that kind of novel these relations should be introduced to some small extent. Even in a detective story we do prefer that the imbecile friend of the detective should in the end marry the pale and anxious niece of the gentleman who was wrongly suspected of the murder, and even in that type of novel—a great favourite with myself—which deals with visits to other planets we most of us are pleased if the adventurer who has got there in the end finds himself united in the bonds of holy wedlock in Jupiter or Saturn, with the pale and beautiful princess of the planet. The subject has certainly puzzled me. I trust the lecturers who have given it more attention have been less bewildered by it than I. I know we shall get very interesting discourses from both of them. I call on Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith (applause).

MISS SHEILA KAYE-SMITH : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I must confess to having very much shared the Chairman's confusion of mind as to the exact task which was set before me this evening. I share his uncertainty as to what definitely constitutes a sex novel. It also seems to me that if one of two possible answers is given to that question then the whole matter is disposed of at once and there is no alternative. But I also had the extra uncertainty in that I did not know until about half an hour ago which side of the debate I was supposed to take (laughter). I understood

that there was to be a debate of a high intellectual calibre between Miss Rebecca West and myself, and therefore I felt at a considerable disadvantage because I had not the slightest idea whether I was for the ayes or for the noes. However, I have had my anxieties set at rest by being told that it does not matter what I say so long as I am not serious. First of all I may as well dispose of the point as to what is a sex novel. It might be two things. It might be the kind we always call the sex novel and shake our heads over. Or it might be the ordinary love story, the serial in *Forget-me-Not* or something of that sort. I think it is a pity to limit the word sex to its cruder manifestations, and therefore I suggest what we mean is : " Is there any alternative to the love story ? " Would it be possible to construct a novel in which the element of sex as understood by the love story does not come in at all ?

Well, there is existing at the present moment in Vienna a great man who has been the most inestimably useful person to novelists—Dr. Freud. I really do not know how most of the novelists who have been writing during the last ten years could have got on without him. He tells us there is no alternative to the sex novel because there is not, quite definitely, any alternative to sex. His definition would include the serial in *Forget-me-Not*, and the stories by Miss E. Everett Green. According to him there is not a single action we commit which has not been predetermined in some way by that activity, that all-comprehensive activity, which he describes as sex. The mere fact that, for instance, Mr. Jones is the churchwarden at St. Peter's instead of St. Paul's, or that Mrs. Jones is invariably sick when she travels by Newhaven, all these things have

some hidden root in the sex life of these individuals. Therefore, from that point of view, there is no alternative to the sex novel, because Dr. Freud uses the term sex to describe all the emotional part of us, in contradistinction to the intellectual part, and also, according to him, the intellectual part is built on the emotional and has no definite existence of its own.

However, Dr. Freud is not the founder of the only school of psychology, and other psychologists have allowed us to take a whole number of primitive emotions, varying in number from three to a dozen. My own theory that I should like to bring forward quite seriously is, that a novel can legitimately be founded on any one of these primitive emotions as long as they really are primitive emotions, and not sophisticated or abnormal ideas. Roughly speaking, I do not believe in novels founded on ideas. I do not think you can really get good stuff unless you build on emotion, because emotions are the most vital part of us and the only part of us that has any living or pushing quality in it ; and for that reason I should be very sorry to see the sex novel as understood in the narrow sense die out or become very much less common, because sex is one of the few abiding emotions we have left in our modern civilization which has not become civilized out of existence. In pugnacity, curiosity and any emotions of that kind, I think that probably we are very different from our forefathers, but in the matter of the relations of the sexes, in affairs of the heart, we still seem close to where the cave-men were. This is a very refreshing quality in our civilization—that we have something left quite crude and primitive. That is why sex is so interesting, because what is

crude and primitive must also be disruptive, and what is so interesting as the disruptive thing? What makes the love story? Is it not the *cliché* that the course of true love never did run smooth? To get our dinners is now a perfectly ordinary thing, but it was once disruptive. No one would ever dream of writing a novel about that. If novels had been written 20,000 years ago there would have been great scope for one on how the father of the family got his food.

Nowadays we have been left with this one great disruptive element in our lives, and therefore I think we are missing a very great opportunity if we do not take full advantage of it in constructing our fiction. There is no other element which has quite the same thrill about it. If you take, well, self-preservation, you have got to work up something altogether incredible in the way of dangers and diversities to make your story interesting. The mere daily risks one runs crossing streets and going up and down stairs leave us cold, though it is a fact that most of the policies paid in the newspaper insurance schemes are paid for home accidents. These things cause comparatively little interest, and, if we are to write a story round the instinct of self-preservation, we have to bring in something very abnormal—liners sunk in the Atlantic, or houses on fire, and things of that kind which do not come into everyone's experience—whereas if we are to write a novel of sex we write about things which happen to everybody and bring excitement and interest into everybody's life.

Take the novel written round the instinct of curiosity—the adventures of an explorer in Labrador or "King Solomon's Mines." Somehow or

other these are never taken quite seriously as novels. They rest upon a set of experiences limited to the few, which the many can only take for granted. Most people have nothing in their own experience by which they can check these adventures, and therefore the whole thing to them is something of a tall story. The novelist has to introduce improbabilities to make his story palatable, and usually ends by writing something which can only be called a yarn. In the sex story there is no need to deal with the impossible or with the melodramatic. A perfectly good love story can be composed out of perfectly ordinary ingredients. The most successful love stories in the world have been made in this way, and have nothing specially romantic or adventurous about them. The point I should like to maintain is that there is no alternative to the sex novel, that novels may be written which have no relation to love, but that these will always be in a sort of side street, and I cannot imagine that the time will come when either the novel of adventure, or the novel of intrigue, or the kind of fiction especially popular in America—the novel of business and money-making—will ever be rivals to the sex novel. Personally, I should be very sorry that they should, for I like to think that we have this primitive instinct at play among us, providing excitement for dull lives, without resort to the abnormal. Of course, the thing can be overdone. A novel which deals exclusively with love has a lopsided effect. We know that there are a great many things in life besides love, and to centre the entire mechanism of a book in it is to give an unbalanced or an abnormal view of life. We must keep our balance and realize that, absorbing as a love interest in a book is, it should not

as a rule be the only interest. Sometimes it has been treated very successfully as the only interest of quite a long book. Mr. Compton Mackenzie's "Guy and Pauline," which seems to me the perfection of an ordinary love story, nevertheless fills a book of considerable length and contains very little that is of interest except the love element. On the other hand, some of the most vital novels that have ever been written—Fielding, Thackeray, Meredith—contain other themes besides the love story, which has 75 or 60 per cent. of the interest, but leaves the rest to other subjects; and I think this is really the ideal novel. But as for shelving the love interest altogether—I do not believe it can be done, except as a stunt. At the present moment I cannot think of a single novel without a love interest which I should put in the first rank, except those of Defoe, if you would call them novels. I suppose "Robinson Crusoe" is a novel written round the adventure and exploration instinct.

Of course, people will say we make a mistake in stressing the love interest, that to focus the ideas of young people who are supposed to be the chief novel readers—I do not believe they are—entirely on the element of love is perhaps to throw their lives out of perspective and give them an interest which is not perhaps a first-class value in a life where everybody has to push his way and get on as quickly as possible. My own strong opinion is that the only love stories which have a demoralizing influence are, not those of the cruder kind of sex novel, which are banned by the libraries, but the romantic novel, the novel in which a love story is linked up with the romantically impossible, the kind very often sold for sixpence to mill-girls

in manufacturing towns and dealing with impossible adventures of, say, some mill-hand who marries the son of her employer, or is followed through the street by some man who knew the minute he saw her back that she was the only girl in the world for him. That kind of novel does a very great amount of harm. Or follow it even into high circles. Take the poor down-trodden wife who at last meets the perfect lover. Well, to throw a glamour round a story of that kind is a mistake as a rule, because some silly woman who does in such circumstances meet with a lover might consider him the perfect lover of novel-land instead of the ordinary cad that he probably is. And to give false ideas of life is the only unpardonable sin in literature ; and it is the romantic view of life that is so false. Realism can be equally false, but it is not generally so popular. It does not pay to be truthful ; it does pay to be romantic. We want in fiction what we do not get in life, and yet it must be recognizable as something which *can* be got in life. We do not want the impossible and the abnormal, but we do want the romantic, and romance is so often simply a fear of ourselves. Anything can be made romantic if we work from a certain standpoint, and I think it is the romantic sex novel which the libraries should hide under the counter, and not the more definitely crude kind of sex novel which is occasionally given a thoroughly good advertisement by being banned. My own strong conviction is that there is no alternative to the sex novel, and that we do not want one (cheers).

MISS REBECCA WEST : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. Like Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith and



H. HAWKES

Miss SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

the Chairman—they put it less crudely than I am going to do—I think the motion is very silly, and I begged the organizers to alter it, but they paid no attention to me. But I thought in the presence of Miss Kaye-Smith they might have made the title, “Is there any alternative to the Sus-‘sex’ novel?” Now, I do not think there is any such thing as a sex novel at all among novels that are novels, novels worthy to take their place as works of art. The novelist may select a sexual subject as his theme, but a novel is a criticism of life, and sexual life is not detachable from life. You may have a novel beginning with sex as its central theme, but if the writer is an artist he does not show his characters as sexual beings, but as human beings who live a life in which the sexual element is subordinated as it is in fact in the Universe, where the sexual instinct has not the stage to itself but has to share it with all the other instincts.

In Ferdinand de Rojas’ *Celestina*, the main character is a very naughty old lady, who lived in Madrid, and represented the darkest side of that city, but when you have read that book you forget her specifically bad character and remember her as the spiritual sister of Autolycus and all the merry rogues in fiction. Then you have *Roxana*, by Defoe, a novel which deals with the life of a courtesan, but you do not think of that lady at all as a courtesan. When you look back on the book you think first of all of a character of steel, of a study in will. Then there is a book by Anatole France, *Histoire Comique*, which is a novel of sex, but which is a work of art. Therefore, when you look back at it you do not think of it as that but simply see it as a picture of a human soul proceeding down

life pursued by the fear of madness, and being caught at the end. The only sex novels are novels-that-are-not-novels, by novelists who cannot make their novels interesting without it. They may choose for that purpose always the sexual interest. Nat Gould, for instance, made his puppets engage in racing. Strindberg, the great Swedish dramatist, who in the face of public opinion I insist on regarding as an artist of about as high rank as Nat Gould, also produced puppets when he tried to write about human beings, and, to get some sort of interest in his account of their proceedings, described them quarrelling with their husbands or wives, an activity of which he himself, having been married unhappily three times, had some inside knowledge and which he could trust to rouse a certain response in a certain percentage of his readers. And when this failed he described his characters having epileptic fits, a calamity of which he, poor creature, also had inside knowledge, and round which the Scandinavian public seems to have gathered as a Cockney would round a street accident.

But for ordinary people without this specialist training, obviously sex is the thing to resort to—Elinor Glyn, Victoria Cross, Ethel M. Dell—these people cannot invent real people at all, and therefore they show them doing the sexual things, in the hope that they are intrinsically interesting. I recall one of Elinor Glyn's books which represents a yachting party of very much the same sort of people that Henry James wrote about. If he had thought of that party he might have produced something like "The Sacred Fount." She could not do that, so she makes one man of the party, a Russian Prince, rush down into the cabin of one of the ladies, run up to the deck

and hold her over the bulwarks for some obscure purpose of amorous discipline. Her book is quite dull and stupid to the point of exasperation, unless you are blasé about that sort of thing.

This kind of book will probably eliminate itself if people get better looking and more attractive. I think these books are read by people who live very dull and drab lives and want some compensatory influence. I once went to Gibraltar and the boat was filled with ladies going to their husbands in the outposts of our great Empire, and they were rather a dull type of women. I think they had not been chosen in the usual way, but had been appointed by the Government, no doubt on the highest ground. And, when we came south of Portugal and looked across the sea to the dark hills of Africa, all these women sitting on deck-chairs rose up and went to the bulwarks and said, "Oh! the Garden of Allah." This compensatory aspect is not confined to the writers of these books. I have just remembered that a little while ago an American publisher came to see me. He was a gentleman with very large eyes and horn-rimmed spectacles, and a very large mouth. He was telling me about people who wrote for him. He said, "I published all the books of Mrs. So-and-So" (naming the writer of one of these sex novels). I said, "Well, I don't think much of her." He said, "The trouble with her is that she is a plain woman and has too much temperament for a plain woman and just pours it into her novels" (laughter). I see I cannot go on with that argument because it really involves proving that Miss Kaye-Smith, Mr. Squire, and myself, are better looking than Victoria Cross, Miss Dell and Mr. Hichens. I think a

competition on those lines might have been more interesting than this debate (laughter).

I do not quite agree with Miss Kaye-Smith that because of the limited play of instinct we are more or less held down to the sex novel. I think one cannot really say that human nature is classifiable according to instinct. If there are very few instincts in human nature, there are a lot of incidents. Tolstoi said that every man's experience was a microcosm of every other man's experience. I do not think that is true. The kind of people who say you cannot change human nature are people of little account. I once lived in an Essex village on the Southend line and used to travel in carriages filled with season ticket holders. They debated political questions and Socialism. They used to fold their *Daily Mails* and say, "You cannot change Yuman Nature." Now they knew nothing of life except Southend and the *Daily Mail*. If you consult Miss Jane Austen's *Emma* and read about the Southend of those days, you will know that modern Southend is entirely different ; and I think there has never been anything quite like the *Daily Mail* in the history of the world before. They were in fact an abundant proof that human nature and its circumstances change constantly and vastly.

People who have seen more of life, people who have made a study of life and of all the possible variations that may exist, the anthropologists, come to a conclusion very different from that of the Southend season-ticket holder. One author says he was talking to certain Polynesians and wanted to find out about their habits, so, to give them a lead, he let them ask him questions about his habits. They said, "If you were to be given much money,

what would you do with it?" He said, "I would spend it." They said, "Would you give it to your relatives?" He replied, "I might." "Your mother?" "Perhaps." "Your father?" "Possibly." "Uncles and Aunts?" And he said, "No." Then they all burst into shrieks of laughter at a scheme of society so devoid of altruism that one would not share everything with fathers, mothers, uncles and aunts. And even in a fairly closed area like, say, modern Europe, there seem to me to be enormous and fundamental differences in human nature. I do not know if many people were as surprised as I was in reading Tchechov's letters. Here is a man we all feel in sympathy with, and we feel as near to him as to our dearest friend. Yet there are passages in his letters entirely foreign, which one cannot understand. If, for instance, you were told that a man lost all he had in gambling at a seaside resort, you would think of somebody with a receding forehead and chin. But here you get this man, who seems the most wise and understanding, explaining how he has lost all his money at Naples in an ordinary casino, and it filled him with exultation because it brought him close to the nature of things—a point of view entirely incomprehensible to us. If human nature is as full of variations as this I do not see why we should be bound down to the sexual instinct.

Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith said the thing that most recommends sex as a subject is that we all know something of sex, that we do not have to invent a framework outside the experience of the average reader to carry our story. I think the whole point is that we have got to make the average reader work harder. We give you things that are too easy. In

saying that, I am not on the modern side in literature and art which begins by making things look like a jig-saw puzzle. I am not on the side of people like James Joyce, who is doing the very greatest disservice to his own talent by producing this jig-saw effect by leaving out verbs and punctuation. People who tamper with the sentence are doing something fundamentally wrong. What is the matter with the sentence? It is a lovely instrument. They are like the architect who says, "I am going to form an entirely new form of architecture. I am going to do it by crushing bricks to dust." He would not get very far. I do not believe these people who deprive themselves of power are doing any good. Nor do I see that there is any sense behind that other movement one sees in the works of Dorothy Richardson, which aims at bringing down the unity of sensation into an itemized account of them. You know the school I mean: that describes the girl who cannot eat her dinner through having been jilted. "Spinach, spinach green. On a plate. Eggs. Yellow eggs. Robert's moustache. Pale yellow too! Not her moustache now. But spinach, yellow and green. (*diminuendo*) My God." These writers are much in the way of people who say, "I have found out a new way to eat." All they have found is a new way to be sick. I do think the novel is capable of development in the way of asking much more from the people who read it. The last year has proved very much the path in which we must advance by the production of two new books, David Garnett's "Lady into Fox" and Gerhardi's "Futility." These books really are an advance on anything that has gone before. I am not claiming any great intrinsic merit for them.

I only say they have travelled into new country. Old people find it difficult to get out of these books what young people get out of them. In the case of Gerhardi it is because he has claimed a rather wider sphere for irony. Swift looked on the phenomena of life and said, "This pretends to have a pleasant meaning, but it has not." Gerhardi says, "This has no meaning," and that, to the minds of the old past generation, is an advancing terror. It is a thing they cannot quite face. They do not want to admit that the show of life may not only have tragic meaning, it may have no meaning at all. I think that is an advance. Not that I adhere to that philosophy. But I feel that a work of art ought not to have to adhere to a popular philosophy. The other book is a pleasant example of claiming the right to fantasy for prose as well as poetry. It has always been a great grievance of mine that one of the greatest novels of our time, "Wind in the Willows" (by Kenneth Grahame), a work of art of the greatest importance, comes down to us as a child's book, because it is a fantastic book. If a novelist can give you something as far removed from reason as some poetry you have got to take it from him.

Another thing I have to submit. Books ought not to be as readable as they are. We let your attention down much too easily. Novels are written not as symphonies but as melodies in two-four time, in the key of C major. Where would music be if it accepted those limitations? I used to review books for a weekly paper and there were a large number of books, I assure you, I could read—and not lose any of their peculiar bouquet—in two hours. It was easy to read them. That is very often because

the writers had nothing on earth to say, but it is also because there has sprung up a most formidable technique of making things as easy as possible for the readers. It is all pre-digested stuff. I do not see why it should be. Poetry does not accept the same limitations. You do not find poets saying, "I must make it as simple as possible for readers who are a little wanting" (laughter). I have heard people say they do not like Walter de la Mare's "Memoirs of a Midget," because it is so difficult to read. A Beethoven symphony is not very easy to understand. You cannot make it a part of yourself if you only hear it once. If you get hold of a good novel you ought to be prepared to spend, not two days, but two months, and perhaps read it ten times if it is a good novel, because, after all, if you are not an artist you cannot do anything better than enjoy art. Also there is a great limitation applied to novels at present in the way that you insist on the contents of the novel being as select and as relevant as, say, the contents of your drawing-room, I mean in persons. If you go there you do expect to find all the people there know you, or your friends who have brought them to see you. But there is no earthly reason why you should expect the same of a novel. If there are certain characters which seem to balance each other in the artist's mind, which seem to contribute to each other by their contrasting richness, then a novelist has a complete right to put them in the same book. One of the most exhilarating things for artists has been the discovery of Marcel Proust. He does not fool with his sentences or affect other than the accents of sense. He writes many passages that might have been written by Dickens, a great many passages show



Madame YEYONDE

Miss REBECCA WEST

the influence of Ruskin. He is thoroughly conventional in writing as well, but he has the courage to say, "Firstly, I am going to write something not easy to read; secondly, I am going to write stuff which has no apparent logical connection one part with another. You can read one passage after another, and you may want to know why we follow the others : you won't know till the end. You will know then, and it will be worth knowing ; for I am an artist." That is really an indication of the lines on which the novel has got to develop. It has got to repudiate all limitations, and chief among those that it must repudiate is the limitation to a sexual theme (cheers).

MR. J. C. SQUIRE : I am told that as a matter of form a few words are expected now from the Chair. You will all agree with me when I say we could not possibly have expected to receive this afternoon two lectures more able than those to which we have listened (cheers). We had from Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith that fine and eloquent plea for honesty in the writer of fiction, and we have just heard from Miss West a most brilliant exposition of the conflicting tendencies in contemporary art, and a most extraordinarily sensible diagnosis of them, with many recommendations to artists. I shall take away with me the memory of a remarkably enlightening debate, and a few more or less amusing pictures. I shall cherish the memory of Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith hugging to her bosom the last slight element of crudity that remains in our civilization. I shall long remember the spectacle of Miss West standing on this platform, and you hardly laughed at all, advising you all to take two months in reading a novel, and,

if that did not do, to read it ten times more, taking two months each time—an imposition that might possibly be good for you, but would certainly knock the bottom out of the fiction market (laughter). And I shall remember another picture, an imaginary one that came into my mind in the earlier portion of her speech, of a Russian prince on board a P. & O. liner, attempting to hold Miss Rebecca West over the bulwarks (laughter).

Well, as I say, we have had an extraordinarily enjoyable afternoon, and there was to me only one slight tincture of disappointment, and that was not entirely unexpected. I knew the subject of this afternoon's discussion before I knew who was going to take part in it. When I heard it, I thought to myself, "Now a great many novels I see are extraordinarily obscene and extraordinarily dull, and presumably somebody believes in these and presumably I shall have an opportunity of hearing some sane person defend the obscenity and dullness." When I saw these two names my expectations substantially diminished. I said to myself, "Neither of them is really very dull (loud laughter). And the other part too." And of course the upshot is what one would have expected. They both really dodged the only matter connected with the sex novel that really needed discussion. Miss Kaye-Smith started with it but managed to get away with some celerity. Miss West just saluted it in the first few sentences and then proceeded to ignore it with an ease and with an impudence which it would have been impossible to surpass (laughter).

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, these are sufficient remarks to bring these proceedings to a formal close.

Mr. E. B. OSBORN : Before you retire into reality, I ask you to give a vote of thanks to the Chairman, who has not only been a bright Chairman but also an admirable squire of dames.

LECTURE III

Drama and the Commercial Theatre

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE

MR. C. B. COCHRAN

Chairman : MISS CLEMENCE DANE

MISS CLEMENCE DANE : I have never been a chairwoman before and I am very nervous. First of all, I have to introduce two speakers whom it is not necessary to introduce. That is why I feel nervous ! Have you ever read " Alice through the Looking-Glass ? " Do you remember the tremendous adventure, when she meets the lion and the unicorn fighting for the crown ? If you recollect she has to cheer them up between the bouts. That is my job and it is a peculiarly difficult one because I do not really know which is the lion and which the unicorn. I do not really know who is defending the Commercial and who the Uncommercial Theatre. If you had asked me who was defending the Uncommercial Theatre a year ago I should have said the lion—I mean Mr. Ervine, because he is intellectually a great trouble and worry to me. He spoils my Sunday rest (laughter)—I read him at breakfast, and whether, I furiously disagree with him or heartily agree, he invariably sets me to work arguing over the theatre on the one day that I ought to be forgetting all about it. I have always

looked upon him as a highbrow, but even there he has upset my ideas. I will tell you why. About a year ago there was a good deal of talk about a play of his, and everybody told me that it was a very highbrow play, and that it would be good for me to go and see it ; that it would be good for my brain, and that it would tone me up ; until finally I did go ! But it was a hot evening in August, and I can't say I looked forward to it. I was tired and what I really wanted was George Robey. But, you know, that play—(it was “ Jane Clegg ”)—was a most awful fraud. It was not highbrow at all, but one of the most thrilling and dramatic plays I've ever seen, the sort of human thing anyone could enjoy. When I came out I said, “ But look here, this is not highbrow ; this is human ! ” and I felt that once more I'd not been treated fairly ! Such an experience makes it difficult for me now to decide whether Mr. Ervine represents the Intellectual Theatre or not. Mr. Cochran is also not in his right place. He has produced Ibsen ; he has been responsible for the Russian ballet ; he has brought to London the plays of Eugene O'Neill, and, it is whispered, is in good time to bring Signora Duse herself. How then is he a representative of the purely Commercial Theatre ? Anyway, what is a Commercial Theatre ? Is it a theatre that wants to make money ? Then is an Uncommercial Theatre one that does not want to make money ? And what is The Drama ? I hope that before these two kill each other they will explain exactly what they mean by these two titles (laughter and cheers).

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE : Miss Dane, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have seldom seen a worse imitation

of a unicorn than Mr. Cochran is giving at this moment (laughter). I hope that my imitation of a lion will be more successful (laughter). Miss Dane has told you how nervous she was about this debate. I have been trembling all day. Mr. Cochran, so Mrs. Cochran tells me, has been trembling for *four* days. But the reason why we are trembling is not because you are here—we are not afraid of you—but because we are terrified of Miss Ellen Terry, who is on the platform (loud cheers)—and we are terrified of her because we feel sure she will go out of this hall saying she has never listened to worse enunciation in her life (laughter). Since I came into this building I have been wondering why Mr. Cochran is here at all. I can only assume that he is on this platform out of chivalry. Realizing that the commercial manager would not dare to show his face here, Mr. Cochran, out of philanthropy and pure kindness of heart, has come to put up a show for him. He has rushed in where fools fear to tread (laughter).

I shall begin by drawing a distinction between a commercial manager and what I call “a man of the theatre.” The commercial manager came into existence chiefly about the time that war was declared, but the man of the theatre has been in existence ever since the theatre began. Mr. Cochran is a man of the theatre. Mr. Granville-Barker was a man of the theatre. Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander, Ibsen, Molière, Shakespeare, Burbage—all these, randomly named, were men of the theatre—and Miss Horniman, in my sense of the word, was also a man of the theatre. A man of the theatre may be an author, a manager or an actor, but is preferably all three together, as Shakespeare and

Molière and Mr. Granville-Barker were, and is certainly a man who believes in the theatre as an institution of value and gives it the first place in his mind. The difference, roughly, between a commercial manager and a man of the theatre is that the first thinks primarily of profit while the second thinks primarily of the play. Now, there is no sin in making a profit—it is the rent of ability—although it is exceedingly difficult to make a profit to-day without committing a sin. There is, however, something sinful and shameful in doing your job primarily or exclusively for the profit you are going to make out of it. That is what the commercial manager does, and that is why he is in a state of what the Catholic Church calls “mortal sin.” He commits the sin against the Holy Ghost.

When you have drawn that distinction between the commercial manager and the man of the theatre you realize at once that Mr. Cochran has no business to be here at all. He has not been a man of commerce : he has been a man of the theatre, and even, on occasions, a philanthropist. Once or twice he tried to lapse from a state of grace into a state of commerce, and tried not to be a man of the theatre in order that he might become a commercial manager. The result was disastrous, and he made a mess of his business. But our job to-day is to consider, not Mr. Cochran, but the commercial manager. My job is to attack him, and I shall do so in a number of assertions.

The first is that the commercial manager invariably fails to do what he sets out to do, make a profit. He does not, in fact, know his own silly business, and the result is that the road to Carey Street is strewn with the corpses of commercial

managers. I am prepared to prove, or, at all events, assert (laughter) that in proportion to the amount of money invested in commercial plays and plays of the theatre, enormously more money has been lost on "popular" pieces than on all the highbrow plays put together. Five "popular" plays, financed by business men, were produced about a year ago in London. Their combined "run" was something like three months, and enough money was lost on them to finance twenty repertory theatres for a whole year! We constantly read of the bankruptcy of commercial managers. My regret is that we do not read of their irretrievable ruin. But you very rarely read of the bankruptcy of a man of the theatre. Now, why is this?

The commercial manager is bound to fail because his guiding principle is a vicious one. No man alive can tell whether a play will be a financial failure or success. Any intelligent man can say whether a play is a good one or a bad one. I say this, despite the disparity of taste. At all events, it is far easier to say whether a play is good or bad than it is to say whether it will be financially successful or disastrous. Now, the commercial manager is always trying to do this impossible thing, produce a play which will be a certain box-office success, and he starts off with a contempt for the public taste; he believes that the stupid and vulgar thing will be more profitable than the intelligent and decent thing. The man of the theatre does not care, fundamentally, whether his play is a financial success or not, so long as it is good and reputable. He hopes that it will bring profit to him, must, indeed, get some profit if he is to carry on his business; but what he

is chiefly concerned about is a fine play which will bring credit to him and reputation to his theatre. That sort of manager, despite all criticism, predominated in the English theatre up to the beginning of the war. Then the men of commerce took his place. In the days of Shakespeare, commercial men hated the theatre and they drove it out of the City and sent it West. Some of us, remembering the contemporary theatre, feel that they have been sending it West ever since (laughter). The modern man of commerce does not persecute the theatre : he exploits it. Discontented with the profits of munitioneering, he looked about for a new world to conquer and saw the theatre and the swollen war-audience. Here was a field for profiteering ! He took possession of it, displacing the man of the theatre, and, if he is not thrown out of it, he will reduce it to ruins.

If you go into the theatre in the belief that the best play is the play which makes the most money and has the longest "run," you are obviously starting from the wrong base altogether, for you must conclude that "Chu Chin Chow" is a better play than "Hamlet." "Chu Chin Chow" was consecutively performed for five years, but "Hamlet" has never had more than a hundred consecutive performances. Consider the likely record in the theatre of a man who believes that the best play is the play which makes the most money, and that a bad play can be made into a good one by expensive production. He will begin by searching for the play which draws the largest crowd. He must do that if, on his principle, he is to make a profit. The character of the search will be understood when I say that the commercial manager, having no natural

flair for a play, cannot visualize one from a manuscript, but must see it performed before he can decide whether or not it is actable. That is why nearly half the plays in London at present are imported plays. The commercial manager has been running about the world looking for plays which have been performed for a long time ; and, in effect, all we are getting, throughout the theatre, is a world exchange of rubbish. It has been said that this choice of plays has been influenced to some extent by the rate of exchange, but I have no knowledge which enables me to argue about that.

My first two assertions are, that the commercial manager's money standard is the wrong one, and that he has not got the *flair* for a play in manuscript which is possessed by the man of the theatre. My third and fourth assertions are, that, because of his money standard, the commercial manager must have long "runs" for his productions, and that because he must have long "runs" he is steadily debasing the standard of acting. I do not propose to deal with the question of long "runs" here, because it has been argued many times before, but I ask you to imagine the effect on a young actor, starting his career, of getting an engagement in a play which "runs" for a year. He may not have more than two or three hundred words to say in his part. Probably he will have less than fifty. Can anyone believe that he is increasing his power as an actor by repeating those fifty or three hundred words eight times a week for a year ?

On those four counts alone, I think I am entitled to say that the influence of the commercial manager on our theatre is a harmful one. The result of his influence is sufficiently obvious to anyone who

conducts even a superficial survey of the English stage. The provincial theatre is in ruins and the London theatre seems likely to be in ruins before long, because the commercial manager has forced up the cost of production to such an extent that theatrical enterprise has become almost impossible. In this matter, dear is nasty, and for some time now we have been treated to the spectacle of managers producing plays at great expense which ought never to have been produced at all. They were "taken off" quickly enough, although not always as quickly as they ought to have been.

But there is another charge to be made against the commercial manager, and in some respects it is the most serious. He makes no discoveries. Who found Mr. Eugene O'Neill? A commercial manager? No. Even Mr. Cochran, who has just produced "Anna Christie," did not find him. In this country he was discovered by Mr. Norman MacDermott, of the Everyman Theatre at Hampstead. In his own country of America, he began to work with a small band of unknown persons, cranks, highbrows—whatever you please to call them—in a village in Massachusetts. These uncommercial people wrote plays which they produced and acted. Eventually, they found a disused stable in New York, which they converted into a small theatre, and here, under the name of "The Washington Square Players," they started Eugene O'Neill on his career. John Millington Synge was discovered by the directors of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Stanley Houghton was discovered by Miss Horniman at the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester. John Drinkwater was discovered at the Repertory Theatre in Birmingham. Small, cranky,

highbrow groups found Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy and Granville-Barker and St. John Hankin. The Stage Society found "C. K. Munro." How many discoveries, such as these, have been made by the commercial managers? Absolutely none. Nor can they ever make any, because the principles on which they conduct their business debar them from doing so.

The theatre in which Shakespeare worked was conducted by men of the theatre, all working in it as authors, actors or co-managers. These men made their livelihood out of the theatre, but they were not primarily or exclusively engaged in the manufacture of profit. None of them made fortunes, as the commercial manager understands "fortunes," and all of them were subject to grave disabilities, both legal and social. But out of that harassed activity came the great glory of Marlowe and Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Similar glory has been made by men of the theatre in our own time. We remember the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre, and we remember many more, but let me set out the details of one man of the theatre's management for your private comparison with that of any contemporary commercial manager. The late Charles Frohman, who was a great man of the theatre, conducted a season of plays at the Duke of York's theatre a few years before the outbreak of the war. The season lasted for seventeen weeks, in which time the following plays were produced: "Justice," by John Galsworthy; "Misalliance," by Bernard Shaw; "Old Friends," by J. M. Barrie; "The Sentimentalists," by George Meredith; "The Twelve-Pound Look," by J. M. Barrie; "The Madras House," by H. Granville-



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Mr. ST. JOHN ERVINE

ERVINE

Barker ; " Helena's Path," by Anthony Hope and Cosmo Gordon-Lennox ; " Chains," by Elizabeth Baker ; " Trelawney of the Wells," by A. W. Pinero ; and " Prunella," by H. Granville-Barker and Laurence Housman. The record of Miss Horniman at the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester is even finer than that. Mr. Frohman made no money, and when he died he left a fortune of two or three hundred pounds. Miss Horniman made no money, and her theatre is now a picture-palace. But will anyone, comparing the activities of these two with the activities of all the commercial managers who have occupied our theatre since 1914, deny that Frohman and Miss Horniman enriched us or assert that they were, in any worthy sense, defeated ? There are two ways of being defeated. You may go down in dishonour and you may go down in glory. The man of the theatre, when he went down, nearly always went down in honour. The commercial manager, when he went down, nearly always went down in disgrace.

Life is an adventure. If you are not prepared to take risks, you had better get into your grave as quickly as possible, lest Life should find you out and get back on you. The commercial manager will not take any risks, but runs about the town, carrying a banner with the strange device, " Safety First." He believes that he can only be saved by being cheap and rich at the same time. The end of that man is ruin, and, worse still, dishonour. Almost, I can find it in my heart to pity him, for who would have as epitaph this inscription : HE FOUND A FINE THING AND SPOILED IT. I believe that the English theatre will shortly recover from the wounds of the war, and that presently we shall

have a renaissance of this nation which will make it as great as ever it was. The spirit of the English people is too stout to be broken by commercial men, however rich or vulgar or mean-minded they may be ; and I sit down in the belief that in a little while the men of the theatre will recover the stage from the men of commerce and make it again a thing of pride (loud cheers).

MR. C. B. COCHRAN : Miss Dane, Ladies and Gentlemen, ever since I accepted the invitation of the organizers of these lectures to reply to Mr. Ervine, I have been conscious that I have taken on a very formidable task. I have been terrified, to put it mildly, but I am more than ever terrified now because Mr. Ervine has taken all the wind out of my sails by being polite to me. I had hoped that he would have called me a commercial manager instead of which he calls me a man of the theatre. I am flattered. I have been more than ever terrified because I am a debutant on a lecture platform and have practically no acquaintance with public speaking of any character. I realize that the majority of you have paid an admission fee to come here this afternoon (laughter)—and for once in my life I have cause to be grateful to Mr. St. John Ervine. He has given you such an admirable and spirited lecture that I feel you will forgive any shortcomings in my reply, and, in any case, remember that it is for charity.

It was not vanity that brought me here. I think there was a certain amount of curiosity. I had been told by mutual friends that Mr. Ervine believed he had been represented in a much discussed scene in one of my revues. I can assure him

that such is not the case, that up to this moment I had never even seen him. I have never seen any portraits of him or oil paintings. That is a tribute to his modesty. Perhaps the chief reason why I came here was to learn a clear definition of the term—commercial manager. I have read a lot about the commercial manager being the curse of the theatre and I quite expected that I should be pointed out as the most glaring example of the people who had ruined the British theatre. I have been anxious to know the difference. Mr. Ervine has very kindly said I am not a commercial manager, but I think he made up his mind to say that after he had met me outside (loud laughter)—because most of his remarks point to me very clearly as being a commercial manager. As far as I can gather the commercial manager is a fellow who like myself has spent all his working life in or about the theatre and, having done so, he knows nothing about it and makes a terrible muddle of everything. I have been thirty-two years in the theatre. I started by crossing the boards of a New York theatre in 1890. Now the man of the theatre—a very beautiful phrase—is a man who rushes into the theatre, pushes in without any knowledge, puts us all right, upsets all our conventions and all our institutions.

But there is one great difference between the commercial manager and the man of the theatre, and that is that the commercial manager has nobody to back him, he has to play with his own resources. With very few exceptions I have never had any help. I have produced my plays with my own money and have used the earnings from one to put into another. Sometimes I have had to borrow it,

whereas I take it that the man of the theatre is one who gets a philanthropist to give him subsidies to further the interests of the theatre, to produce good plays, irrespective of their chances of making money. That is very fine. I applaud Mr. Ervine for his ideals. He is an idealist. So am I, and, if some of his friends who finance the man of the theatre will finance me, I will guarantee to produce good plays. But having to find my own resources for a number of years, I have found it very necessary to weigh up the chance of the money-making possibilities of every play which I have produced, and that is a very difficult thing. As Mr. Ervine says, it is a comparatively easy matter for an educated man to say, "This is a good or a bad play," but even so as a student of the best critics, past and present, I have found a great deal of divergence in opinion as to the merits of even good plays. But at any rate it is easier than saying what play will or will not make money. We have, of course, a very large and varied assortment of tastes to deal with, and it has been my privilege to try and minister to most of them. I am very proud if I have been successful in doing so. I have tried to give something to suit every taste, but I can say sincerely that I have always endeavoured to give the best of its kind. With Mr. Ervine, I fully believe that the theatre is not a place of entertainment only, but I do believe that sometimes the theatre should be a place of entertainment only. There are hundreds and thousands of intelligent and even intellectual people who go to the theatre just as our chairman went to the theatre, feeling that she would like to see and hear George Robey on a particular occasion. Hundreds of thousands go for amusement, and I have tried to cater for

these people, and I think that any manager who wishes to run a theatre successfully without the help of kind financial friends must do the same thing.

Mr. Ervine has spoken about the commercial manager forcing up the cost of production. Well, I do not know that that is so. The commercial manager, I think naturally, has to do what he considers best to attract the public. The cost of production is a thing which depends very largely upon the size of the theatre and of the class of entertainment being given. There are theatres with very large "capacities" which need, at least in my experience, a fairly elaborate production, and the production in a large theatre which has cost several thousand pounds in initial expenses, and which costs, say, a weekly expenditure of £2,000 or more, may be on a sounder financial basis than the smaller theatre with a very limited capacity, producing a modern play which has cost a few hundreds. I have produced a few revues. I have found in a revue a medium for the combination of many arts, and they have given pleasure to many hundreds of thousands of people, and from the profits of these light entertainments I have occasionally been able to gratify my dreams by producing other plays where I thought the financial risk was greater. I have had failures, of course, in the light entertainments as in others, but I think on balance that I have come out rather well on that particular kind of thing, and but for that I should not have been able to do the other plays which at times I have done.

I agree with Mr. Ervine that the object of the theatrical manager should not be only to make money. It has not been my object only to make

money. If I were out for making money only I think I could do it far more easily than by theatrical productions. I hope to make money out of them or at any rate to keep afloat. Mr. Ervine is an idealist, but I also am an idealist, and I venture to think that there is a great difference between the idealist with a pen in his hand only and the idealist with the leases of theatres and hundreds of pounds weekly to find for rent. I am all for the economical theatre, but the practical manager, the commercial manager or, as Mr. Ervine has kindly called me, the man of the theatre, must take things as they are. I deplore high rents. I do not like paying them. One of my landlords (Mr. Arthur Bouchier) is sitting in front here and charges me an abnormal rent. Mr. Ervine would call him a man of the theatre. I think he is a commercial manager.

Mr. Ervine has told us that there has been as much money lost in four or five revues as would finance successfully twenty repertory theatres. I have no doubt that is so. I am credibly informed that there has been enough money lost in repertory theatres to finance quite a number of revues which would make money. I have had a lot of figures from those who have tried conscientiously to give the best in the theatre. I do not know much about financing my productions. I have never been able to get finance for my enterprises, but I believe it is very much easier to get finance for a revue or a farce or an amusing play than for a theatre with very high aims. I will take a case in point. I recently felt that I was not in a position to take a great deal of personal risk with new plays, and yet at the same time I felt I must be up and doing, and I therefore tried to finance some of my ventures. I had three

plays, "So This Is London," "Partners Again," and "Anna Christie." I found it extremely easy to get financial support for the first two, but nobody would look at "Anna Christie." I had to take the risk myself, give Mr. Bouchier his very large rent, bring a company from America and take the entire responsibility myself. Well, fortunately, I have been rewarded.

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE : Hear, hear.

MR. COCHRAN : And it looks like being a very big financial success (cheers). If I have a few more financial successes I will, as I have long wanted to do, devote a theatre entirely to old comedy, Shakespeare, and such modern plays as I think I would like to produce (cheers). "Anna Christie," "Partners Again," and "So This Is London," are all earning money for this at the moment. But I must wait a little while. If, however, some of the people would like to finance me instead of the repertory theatre I will start right away.

Mr. Ervine has instanced Mr. Charles Frohman as a man of the theatre rather than as a commercial manager. Nobody has greater respect for the late Mr. Charles Frohman than I have. I worked with him as a boy and know his great love and aptitude for the theatre. But he was an instrument of the greatest commercial management that ever lived. He was able to do things that nobody in the theatrical world has ever been able to do. He was financed by a group of wealthy men in America who wished to control not only the theatres of America but of the whole world. They got all the theatres in their grasp and they wanted an instrument. Mr.

Frohman was that instrument. He was in a position to make contracts with Barrie, with all the French dramatists, and so forth, so that it was impossible for an English manager to get a play from these men. He cornered a trust of theatres and playwrights and endeavoured to make a trust of actors. I remember—I think Mr. Ervine is too young to remember—that there was a great outcry against this invasion which would commercialize the theatre. I have particular cause to remember it because at that time Mr. Frohman was producing “Too Much Johnson” at the Garrick Theatre. I had just come back from America and was penniless. I was invited to a dinner given by the staff of the “Critic,” run by Henry Hess. I sat next to the Editor, and he asked me what I knew about the theatrical trust in America, and what its influence was likely to be in London. As I had considerable knowledge of the subject the Editor asked me to write an article, which I did, I called it “Too Much Frohman.” This article appeared in the “Critic,” and it was supposed to have sent up the circulation of the paper. At any rate, Mr. Hess was so pleased with it that he commissioned me to write an article every week, and as he gave me three guineas an article, a very high rate at the time and not so bad even now, I was able to keep on the room where I was living and lived on that money for some time.

I am quite sure there is a tendency, as Mr. Ervine has suggested, on the part of the theatre manager to underrate the public, but I am fully convinced, and I cannot emphasize it too strongly, that the theatre, to progress, must be commercial. We must take into consideration the financial possibilities of the play before we produce it. The

flair Mr. Ervine talks about is a very wonderful thing and a theatrical manager should possess it, but with all the *flair* in the world he may make mistakes. I feel very strongly that there is at the moment a tendency on the part of the public to appreciate better plays. We have several instances of it at the moment and I think the manager may be a little more courageous than he has been in the past. It is as easy to make a mistake over the good play as over the money-making play, and Mr. Ervine has told us that Carey Street is strewn with the corpses of commercial managers, but I am sure Carey Street will be strewn with more corpses if they do not give a little consideration as to whether money is coming to the box office as a result of producing a play. A national theatre, a subsidized theatre for the production of plays with a high purpose entirely irrespective of their financial success, may be a thing that is possible, but till that comes we have got to keep the theatres going and we must do our best to make them pay or we cannot keep them going.

I would also say one more thing. The theatre needs a lot of help. There has been a disposition in this country to belittle the theatre. The Press of this country is apt to be pessimistic about the theatre. We are always told that the theatre is going to the dogs, that there is a slump, that there is nothing worth while seeing, and I am convinced that that has had a very bad effect on the theatre-going public. In fact the theatre-going public has grown smaller and smaller. We have lost the taste of the theatre here, and I put that down to this pessimistic note in the Press. Of course, I put it down also to the bad judgment of managers who have produced bad plays. But we need a little

encouragement. A play is not necessarily a bad play because Mr. Ervine does not like it. I do not object to him or to any of his brother critics not liking a play, but I do not think they should dislike a type of play so much that they cannot praise that particular type of play when it is appealing to a large number of sane, healthy-minded people who merely want to go to the theatre for amusement. I have made productions which have produced torrents of abuse, nay, tornadoes of abuse. It is not only the plays that have been abused but I have been abused to such an extent that when I have got over the disappointment of the first night I have been gratified to go into the house and see people enjoying the plays which I have been abused for producing, and I have wondered why these men have tried to down me and all my works. Why have they done it? Because they do not like a particular kind of entertainment and they cannot be amused by it.

I have tried to put the light form of entertainment on a high plane and I venture to think there has been more development in stagecraft in the light form of entertainment than in any other branch of the theatre. A great many lessons have been learnt from it. I have seen productions of plays which deserved better treatment at the hands of what I may term, for want of a better word, legitimate producers. We in the theatre want some encouragement, and I beg that the gentlemen of the Press, not dramatic critics but newspaper proprietors and the Press generally, will remember that this is a very difficult business. We are labouring under tremendous difficulties. We have all sorts of handicaps. We have the London County Council, the Lord Chamberlain, the Ministry of



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Mr. C. B. COCHRAN

Labour and what not. It is all very difficult, and they should give us a little help. When I produce a revue please remember that I am producing it in the hope of making enough money to give you that theatre I have spoken about, and when I get enough money to open that theatre I will even promise to commission Mr. Ervine to write me a play (loud cheers).

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE said : Miss Dane, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Cochran said that he had been told that I was aggrieved because I supposed he had included me in one of his revues. He was misinformed. My grievance was that he did not include me (laughter). If he ever wants to put me on the stage he has my full permission to do it. A little publicity is always welcome.

Mr. Cochran has really given the show away. Did he not tell you he found it perfectly easy to get money from men of commerce for "Partners Again" and "So This Is London," but could not get it for "Anna Christie"? I might as well sit down now. He has proved my case. The extraordinary thing is that "Anna Christie" has justified itself as against the man of commerce, as a good play nearly always will do.

Mr. Cochran said a very curious thing. He said there has always been a slump in the theatre, and then he said that the theatre was going down to-day because people like me criticize it. Why has the theatre audience begun to contract during the last seven years only, although there have always been men like me girding at it? Perhaps there is more justification now for pessimism than before. I believe that Jeremiahs perform a useful

service. We keep things up to the mark. Each generation has to start all over again the business of making the world, and, unless there are men going about saying, "This is not as good as it might be," then it will not long continue to be as good as it is.

Mr. Bouchier was referred to. Apparently he is really the villain of the piece. He does not look very guilty (laughter). But I suggest to you that Mr. Bouchier would much rather be performing in a play of quality, with himself in the cast, than be drawing the large sums of money he is drawing from Mr. Cochran. There never was an actor in the world who would rather be walking about with large sums of money in his pocket than acting, and there never will be, please Heaven.

Mr. Cochran gave instances of the way in which he, as a man of commerce, has been struggling with himself as a man of the theatre. I gather that he makes a lot of money as a man of the theatre in good plays, and then squanders it on rubbish. You know he has produced "Anna Christie" with a cast that includes one of the finest actresses I have ever seen. It was the man of the theatre who did that. A few years ago the man of commerce got the better of him, and he produced "Her Dancing Man." That play was a failure. I do not know who lost the money on it. Now, who was justified, the man of the theatre in producing "Anna Christie" or the man of commerce in producing "Her Dancing Man"? With that, I leave you to decide the matter (cheers).

MR. C. B. COCHRAN : I think I have nothing to add or I should commence the debate all over again,

but I must not lose this opportunity for advertising and say that not only "Anna Christie" but "So This Is London" and "Partners Again" are all making money (laughter and cheers).

MISS CLEMENCE DANE, in closing the discussion, said : I think you will all agree that it has been a gorgeous afternoon. What strikes me most, apart from the fact that I've greatly enjoyed myself, is that both Mr. Ervine and Mr. Cochran are not only frauds but cowards. Mr. Ervine protested that he was so nervous that he did not know what to do, and Mr. Cochran said he had never spoken in public before, and then they both proceeded to make all their points with perfect ease and conviction. Therefore I call them frauds. But I call them cowards because, behind the technicalities, what they have really wanted to say, and have been afraid to say, is that it is not the fault either of the commercial manager or the highbrow manager that things are so wrong in the theatre. It is—your fault ! It is, after all, the business of the public to make clear what it needs and hopes for, by keeping alive the theatre which gives it what it hopes for and needs. That is what they have been afraid to say. I have been told that I have to sum up the points of view of both speakers and give a casting vote. I cannot, because I agree with both ! But there is one thing neither of them has mentioned which I sometimes feel is the real curse of the theatre. I do not feel that the curse of the theatre is either the money side or the idealistic side, but this desire of the public, or rather this belief of the managers in the desire of the public for spectacle (cheers). Now by spectacle I mean

that form of entertainment which appeals purely to the senses and never reaches the soul. I do not pretend that we want Hamlets all the time. We want light stuff just as much as we want serious work. But—do we want spectacle? We always say, I'll admit, that the theatre is more a place for seeing than for hearing, that a blind man misses more of a play than a deaf man does. But what do we come to see in the theatre? Beautiful clothes? Bond Street is much more interesting. Wonderful stage effects? But what scene-painter can attempt to rival the night sky when you step out into the street after a performance, what stage lighting can compete with the sun, the moon and the seven stars? Surely we don't go to the theatre to see that which we can see better in real life, but to see that which we cannot see clearly and as a whole in real life. We all know what jealousy is; we've all come across it. But to realize it we go to see Othello or the Winter's Tale. I went a few years ago, nominally, to see the Winter's Tale—in reality of course to see Miss Terry. But when I got there I didn't see Miss Terry at all. Miss Terry had lent herself, lent her personality, her beauty, her art, her voice and her body to give us, not a thing of the flesh, not a woman that we can see every day, but a thing of the spirit, of Shakespeare's spirit, a thing that we could not see anywhere else in the world; and, just as she lent her body to show us spirit, so one's physical seeing eye in a theatre is merely the vehicle by which one's real eye sees. It is that inner eye which is used when you go to see a good play. But when you go to see a spectacle only the outward eye is employed; the inner eye has nothing to do. Let spectacle



Camera Portrait by E. O. HOPPE

Miss CLEMENCE DANE

in at the door of the theatre and imagination flies out of the window ! The senses reign supreme and we all know that nothing gets so easily bored as the senses. And boredom once let in your spectacle ceases to pay and your theatre is a failure. But coax in imagination and Shakespeare himself has proved to us that it is possible to combine supreme genius with commercial success.

In your name I want to thank the speakers for the extraordinarily interesting afternoon they have given to us (loud cheers).

PROFESSOR WINIFRED CULLIS said : I want you to give your special thanks not only to our lecturers but to our chairman. Those of us who are interested and working in the hospitals have always learnt to expect that we are going to have help whenever we want it from the people of the theatre, but generally it is from the people who are acting and are giving us the soul and the spirit of someone else. This afternoon we have had rather a unique gift from the people of the theatre because we have had those people giving themselves, which is the biggest gift they can give, and we are most grateful not only to the speakers but to our charming chairman who has shown that it is possible to combine idealism with commercial success (loud cheers).

MISS CLEMENCE DANE : Thank you very much.

LECTURE IV

Poetry and Modern Poetry

MISS EDITH SITWELL

MR. ALFRED NOYES

Chairman : MR. EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

MISS EDITH SITWELL : Ladies and Gentlemen, about six weeks ago I was sitting reading *In Memoriam*, and enjoying its nice neat lucid prose style, when a summons arrived from the Combined Hospitals Appeal, a call to do battle on the subject of "Poetry and Modern Poetry." I had always been regarded by myself and by the more sapient of the critics as a quiet, placid old body writing gentle nature-poetry in the traditional style, and I imagined very naturally that I was meant to stand up as the defender of traditional poetry. You may conceive my amazement when I found myself in the opposite rôle ; however, when I heard that the Chairman was to be one who may well be called one of the great Victorians, I consented.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you have come here hoping that I shall attack our great predecessors, you will be disappointed. My brothers and myself are poets who honour the past as well as the future, and who are writing poems in the tradition of English poetry before Wordsworth.

With the advent of Wordsworth the tradition of

English poetry was changed ; and the reason why people say they can understand and are used to the Georgian poets and cannot feel themselves in sympathy with us is because these poets are writing in the tradition of English poetry *since* Wordsworth, whereas we are writing in the tradition of English poetry *before* Wordsworth, and most people are only conversant with poetry of the time of, and since, Wordsworth. How many people, I should like to ask, are familiar with eighteenth-century poetry, or have any but the most cursory knowledge of 16th and 17th century poetry. Most people know a little Shakespeare, a little Milton, and a few Elizabethan lyrics ; but when they get a young man, such as one poet who is in this hall to-day, writing poems which are in a direct line from Marlowe, as big in scale, and as superb in imagery, they stone him as an iconoclast. My school is blamed for innovations in technique, in manner, in vision, and in theme—but we find such men as Ben Jonson, Milton and Coleridge, defending innovations in technique and in vision. Ben Jonson, in his *Discoveries*, says, “ To all the observations of the ancients we have our own experience. . . . It is true they opened the gates, and made the way that went before us ; but as guides, not commanders. . . . Truth lies open to all ; it is no man’s several.” Again, in the same work, Ben Jonson says, “ I am not of that opinion to conclude a poet’s liberty within the narrow limits of laws which either the grammarians or philosophers prescribe. For, before they found out those laws, there were many excellent poets that fulfilled them : amongst whom none more perfect than Sophocles, who lived a little before Aristotle.”

On the same subject, Milton, in his *Reason of Church Government*, argues, "Whether the rules of Aristotle are strictly to be kept, or Nature to be followed, which, in them that know art and use judgment, is no transgression, but an enriching of art."

Dryden says, "Better a mechanic rule were stretched or broken than a great beauty were omitted."

The situation of the rival camps in poetry is this : My camp worships and reverences the great poets of the past, but it does not worship heartburn. The other camp has, I have noticed, a romantic affection for heartburn. My camp, whilst recognizing that the traditional forms in poetry are open to everyone, thinks it mean to sneak the personal technique that certain dead poets have made for themselves, such as that of Swinburne. Swinburne's was largely an individual technique, though he was, excepting in blank verse, perhaps the greatest technician England has produced. Imitations of him, lacking his fire and his superb vowel-technique, which is the only kind of technique that must be born and cannot be made—these imitations are doing him the utmost disservice. By all means let us make use of the past, but do not let us regard poetry as a second-hand clothes shop. A technique and vision are both absolutely necessary to poets, but these are of no value unless they are as much a part of the poet as his skin and bone. They cannot be merely second-hand clothes. Again, my camp recognizes that Wordsworth was a great poet, in spite of his innumerable dull and platitudinous pages. But this does not make them exalt dullness and the cult of the platitude as virtues.

We are accused of triviality, but poetry is no longer a just and terrible Judgment Day—a world of remorseless and clear light. The poet's mind has become a central sense, interpreting and controlling the other five senses ; for we have rediscovered the truth uttered by Blake, that "Man has no body distinct from his soul, for that called body is a portion of soul discern'd by the five senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age."

Modern poets are discovering an entirely new scale of relationship between the senses. Our senses have become broadened and cosmopolitanized. They are no longer little islands, speaking only their own narrow language, living their sleepy life alone. Where the language of one sense is insufficient, they speak the language of another. We know, too, that every sight, touch, sound, smell, of the world we live in, has its meaning—is the result of a spiritual state (as a great philosopher said to me), is, in short, a kind of psycho-analysis, and it is the poet's duty to interpret those meanings.

We are accused of bringing no great message to mankind. I ask you, could we give mankind a greater gift than the heightening of his consciousness ? It takes time to instil the new and heightened consciousness which we are bringing into the race ; but it is a better thing to give the people new sense-values, even if these only penetrate to them in 50 years' time, than it is to take id. off the workers' beer.

Wordsworth, in his Essay Supplementary to Preface, 1815, writes :

"Of genius the only proof is in the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before ; of genius, in the fine

arts, the only infallible sign is the widening of the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of the new element into the intellectual universe ; or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet ? Is it to be supposed that the reader can make progress of this kind like an Indian prince or general—stretched on his palanquin, and borne by his slaves ? No ; he is invigorated and inspired by his leader, in order that he may exert himself ; for he cannot proceed in quiescence, he cannot be carried like a dead weight. Therefore, to create taste is to call forth and bestow power, of which knowledge is the effect ; and *there* lies the true difficulty.”

In the same essay, Wordsworth remarks, “ the poet must reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers.”

If I quote at great length from writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, it is because, though their word now bears the stamp of authority, in their time they were derided and abused as we are derided and abused to-day. These men occupied exactly the position that we occupy to-day. The poets who were admired by the critics and the popular taste in the lifetime of Shelley and Keats were Thomas Moore and Campbell. Keats and Shelley were, on the contrary, hounded.

In its issue of 6th April, the *Times Literary Supplement* complains about this present age in

poetry and prose ; the critic is troubled by “ the fact that two critics at the same table at the same moment will pronounce completely different opinions about the same book.” Mr. Harold Monro replies to this in the current number of the *Chapbook* :

“ The writer in *The Times* views the earlier period inevitably as through a telescope, but his own through a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, or even with the naked eye. We would remind him that in 1823 critics were pronouncing ‘ completely different opinions about the same book ’ with almost, if not quite the same conviction as to-day. Let him transfer himself in imagination to 1823. *Hyperion* was published in 1820, *Prometheus Unbound* in 1821. The genius of Wordsworth was in hot dispute. In 1817, however, Moore had been paid 3,000 guineas for *Lalla Rookh*. Critical literature had recently been enriched by such works as *Biographia Literaria* and Wordsworth’s unparalleled essays and prefaces. . . . But the Mr. Squire, Mr. Lynd and Mr. James Douglas of that moment found mediocrity no less comfortably attractive, and while they were ardently agreeing to differ or agreeing to agree about Moore, Campbell, Kirke White, Bloomfield, Hogg, Southey and others, many of the works that were destined later to represent the genius of the time unconsciously eluded them or were consciously dismissed.”

No great poet has ever been recognized in his own time, or, at any rate, not since the rise of criticism. By the many—including critics—every great poet has always been abused, insulted, worried, and, if possible, driven into the grave—if not, at least into

exile, or to the Pines, Putney. I shall read you a few criticisms, proving that dislike of new beauty which has always prevailed in England. There is no difference between these criticisms and what the real poets are having to put up with to-day, excepting that criticisms have become more vulgar and more personally abusive.

"*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*," said the *Monthly Review*, "seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness, and incoherence, of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding-guest of his breakfast."

"At first," said the *Quarterly*, "it appears to us that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearing his readers with an immeasurable game of *bouts rimés*; but, if we recollect right, it is an indispensable condition at this play that the rhymes when fitted up shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning."

Now take Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review*. "The volume before us (Wordsworth's *The Excursion*), if we were to describe it very shortly, we should characterize as a tissue of moral and devotional ravings, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a few very simple and familiar ideas: but with such an accompaniment of long words, long sentences, and unwieldy phrases—such a hubbub of strained raptures and fantastical sublimities that it is often extremely difficult for the most skilful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning—and altogether impossible for an ordinary reader to conjecture what he is about."

Blackwood says of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*: "To our apprehension it is little else but absolute raving; and, were we not assured to the

contrary, we should take it for granted that the author was lunatic, as his principles are ludicrously wicked, and his poetry a mélange of nonsense, cockneyism, poverty, and pedantry."

And the *Monthly Magazine* says of Keats's poems: "The faults characteristic of his school are still held up with as much affectation by Mr. Keats as if he were fearful of not coming in for his due share of singularity, obscurity and conceit."

Ladies and Gentlemen, those very same criticisms are being repeated to-day against the poets of my school.

It is curious to note that, according to critics themselves, the decay of poetry coincides with the rise of criticism in the commercial press. Osbert Sitwell remarked to me the other day that for the last 100 years genius might be defined as an infinite capacity for giving pains to critics.

When we examine the past to find what reception the poets had, we realize that, though they were abused, at least the people who quarrelled over their bodies were more highly educated than the semi-educated sneering public of to-day. It is my opinion that a great many people now reading and writing and giving their opinions would be better employed in keeping rabbits. Enlargement of the jury to include flappers and ignoramuses has not improved the prospects of poetry. These people say they cannot understand a book. Who on earth expects them to? Poets expect to be judged by their peers, and all that happens is this: they are arraigned in front of a jury which neither understands our predecessors' language, our language, or even their own.

We are accused of being obscure in our meanings.

If it comes to that, Blake's prophetic works are obscure, and what about the meaning of *Hamlet*? It usually spoils a poem to be translated into other words, but, in the case of every poem I have written, I can explain that poem *if* I choose. Coleridge says, in his *Anima Poetæ* : "The elder languages were fitter for poetry because they expressed only prominent ideas with clearness, the others but darkly. . . . Poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood."

In the particular case of the school to which I belong, it is *not* our meanings that are difficult. The difficulty for certain new readers is this : our fresh perception of natural objects comes sometimes as a shock to people who only want comfort, and not the truth. Most people's senses are practically unused ; there is no connection between their senses and their brain, and it irritates them excessively when these are brought into relation. Our works are not difficult if the fact of different sense-values is remembered.

When we hear a lot of nonsense being talked about tradition and the wickedness of innovation in poetry, I should like to remind the audience that practically every great poet, with the exception of Keats and the Elizabethans, appeared as untraditional in their time. Who was Shelley's forerunner, or Wordsworth's, or Coleridge's ? Their ancestry is not to be found in Italianate poetry. But, because our school innovates, it does not mean that we are not steeped in the work of our great predecessors. I can assure you that I, for one, would not have dared to write if I had not a very full knowledge, not only of the English poetry of the past, but also of French poetry, which bears the same relationship to modern

English poetry as Italian poetry bore to the poetry of the Elizabethans. It is better to be an innovator than a refrigerator. There is no need for us to take our predecessors' poetry off the ice.

In judging modernist poets' work we should also examine the influence and trend of other arts. The modern poets' sources of inspiration are quite possibly the same as those of musicians like Stravinski, Schönberg and Debussy, and artists like Picasso, Matisse and Severini. For most ultra-modern poets are people of culture, conversant with the other arts, and with the poetry of other countries. It is a curious fact that those poets of the past to whom our own school is most attracted, those poets of the past with whom we feel most interest and affinity, are often those in whom the highest results of the culture of their wonderful age is most apparent—those who are the most Italianate, the most learned, and the most highly civilized, and who are by those very qualities most concerned with the general European culture of their age in all the arts, in contradistinction to a narrow insular interest. To such poets, in fact, as Marlowe and Peele, to mention only two.

If, as will possibly be the case in a few minutes, we are accused of bearing no moral message, and of disliking a moral message when we find it, well, poetry is primarily an art, and I wish people would remember it. But, when a poem has a good moral message, we do admire it, as in the case of Shelley. It is only when the moral message is corrupt, as in the case of a great deal of Tennyson, that we do not admire it ; at different moments we find Tennyson preaching snobbery, war-mongering, cringing, and it is a curious fact that those very people who accuse

us of having no moral message become epileptic with fury when we do preach a moral message. I should have thought that nothing could be so important at this time as to preach against the hellish wickedness and the horror of war. But such men as Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Osbert Sitwell, who had experienced this horror and were therefore fitted to speak of it, were execrated when they pronounced this great moral message. A great many critics of to-day, those who are not engaged in inculcating dullness as a virtue, are enraptured by every poem which uses large high-sounding abstractions and windy nothingnesses dressed up as metaphysical truths or as mock passion. They dislike us because they do not find these in our work. My answer is, it is better from an æsthetic point of view to be a real butterfly than to be a stage elephant, liable to come to pieces at any moment. On this subject, Matthew Arnold, writing about Sainte-Beuve, said : " Excellent work in a lower kind counts in the long run above work which is short of excellence in a higher."

The point of view of a great many critics and a large part of the public is, unfortunately, that contained in this apocryphal work of the late Mrs. Wheeler Wilcox :

" It is not the song of the singer—

Though naught could be possibly sweeter—
Which touches the spot with a flame that is hot,
But the Heart that is back of a metre.

And, though all my life I have loved

True art for its own true sake,

It is not Art, oh no, it is Heart

Which finally takes the cake ! "

And now we come to the question of free verse. Why should we not innovate? Coleridge, somewhere in his Lectures, says :

“ Do not confound mechanical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material ; as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate ; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form.”

Why should we not shape a body for our poetry which is suitable to its soul? If you say that neither the body nor the soul of our poetry is beautiful, I would reply : Neither did the body nor soul of Shelley's poetry, of Keats's poetry, or of Wordsworth's or Coleridge's poetry appear beautiful to the general public or the critics during their lifetime.

It is, for some inhuman reason, supposed to be terribly dashing and brave and new and modernist to write in free verse. Why? It is a debatable point if a great part of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is not in free verse, and Blake certainly wrote a defence of free verse, so I wish we could reach the end of all the nonsense that is being talked about it, both by its adversaries and by the more ignorant of its supporters. The sooner all the amateurs writing bad verse in bad English all over the world die—the better it will be for poetry. You must not blame the good ultra-modern poets because they are besieged, copied, plagiarized from and badgered about by a million tiresome little people without

talent, who think that, because free verse is free, it is also easy. These little people are an awful nuisance, but they are a worse pest to us than they are to you.

Also, a great many ultra-modern poets do *not* write free verse at all. For instance, I like writing in couplets, which was a form much admired in the time of Samuel Johnson.

And now, finally, let us speak about our madness. We are always being called mad. If we are mad—we and our brothers in America who are walking hand in hand with us in the vanguard of progress—at least we are mad in company with most of our great predecessors and all the most intelligent foreigners. Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner—Shelley, Blake, Keats, Coleridge, Wordsworth, were all mad in turn. We shall be proud to join them in the Asylum to which they are now consigned.

(NOTE.—*For technical reasons Mr. Alfred Noyes's counter-lecture was very inadequately reported, and Mr. Noyes, who spoke without notes, finds himself unable to reconstruct his side of the debate. In the circumstances Miss Sitwell's earnest apologia for the poetry of her fraternity is presented here alone—a challenge to posterity rather than to Mr. Noyes.* —EDITOR).



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Miss EDITH SITWELL

LECTURE V

Is Modern Journalism Worth the Price We Pay for it?

RT. HON. C. A. McCURDY, K.C., M.P.

MR. G. K. CHESTERTON

Chairman : VISCOUNT BURNHAM, C.H.

VISCOUNT BURNHAM : If I know Mr. McCurdy and Mr. Chesterton, the best thing I can do is to intervene between them and you for as short a time as possible. I will only tell you that we have some most distinguished editors of London on the platform, and we are expecting several others. We also have with us—and this will interest you—one of the most distinguished editors and newspaper owners in the United States—Mr. Robert Bingham, owner of the “*Courier Journal and Louisville Times*,” which is one of the most respected of the newspapers of the Southern States of America. I believe his family has been connected with it since it was first published. As an old newspaper man, I can say that woman herself is not more modest or more misunderstood than the Newspaper Press of this country. I am expecting a good deal of enlightenment this afternoon and I shall begin by calling upon Mr. McCurdy to open our discussion.

THE RIGHT HON. C. A. McCURDY, K.C., M.P. :
 Lord Burnham, Ladies and Gentlemen, I was very glad to see that at the dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund the other night an authoritative pronouncement was made on the subject of our discussion this afternoon, which I hope may be of a little assistance to me. I refer to the words of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who said:

“ Modern science, working hand in hand with modern journalism, has, in truth, put a girdle round the earth. We read of marvellous happenings in distant climes, and we see photographs of events and people in every quarter of the globe, and before we settled down to the city news or the Parliamentary report, we should say to ourselves, ‘ This really is very cheap for a penny—or three half-pence, or twopence,’ as the case may be.”

I do not know whether, in view of that finding, Mr. Chesterton thinks it is worth while to pursue this discussion, or whether he is going to have the audacity to challenge that ruling. However, he appears to be sitting pretty solidly and declines to run away, and as, unfortunately, the general public of these islands as a whole do not all take the same enlightened and intelligent view of the Press as the Prince of Wales, perhaps there is something still to argue about. Different people take different views of the Press. I was rather surprised the other day to read an article by the late Mr. Kennedy Jones, a very good journalist, a man who ought to know what he was talking about, and he said :

“ The daily paper is simply an article for the breakfast table—a mere sausage.”

and he goes on to enlarge it a little :

“ If the sausage be palatable and flavoured to taste, it is bought from the same maker daily, but in the maker or those concerned in the making of it the consumer takes no live interest, not though their names be trumpeted and their features reproduced in every picture paper.”

I think from the point of view of the sausage we shall all agree that some of our more expensive papers give an admirably well-filled sausage. Then there is the extreme opposite view of those who regard the Press as the power behind the Throne, a something not ourselves that makes for righteousness or unrighteousness, something that shapes the ends of politicians and ordinary people, rough-hew them how we will ; who, in short, regard the Press as a kind of super-estate of the realm which makes and breaks Prime Ministers and Governments and Kings.

I invite you to take a view of the Press which is somewhere between these two extremes and rather different from either of them. Essentially, the Press in all its manifold variety is the organ of speech which makes humanity articulate. In a small state of ancient times, in Athens or republican Rome, it was possible for a citizen to walk out of the house into the market-place and personally listen to the debates in the Assembly, to stroll into the law courts and the barber's shop and know everything he need know. But in the world of to-day things are altered. We cannot be citizens of the world, we can have no part or lot in this great and glorious adventure of life which Providence has given us unless we know what is going on outside the walls

of the little hamlet in which we happen to reside. It is the modern Press which gives ears and eyes and a tongue to that great dumb multitude which makes up the monstrous modern state. Without it we should for all practical purposes be travelling in blinkers from the cradle to the grave through this great panorama of interesting events which the daily sheet places before us every morning.

Without ears and eyes and the advantage of the power of speech, it is impossible for the State to exist in any proper sense of the word. When Hobbes wrote his interesting book, "The Leviathan," he dealt with this point at an early stage in his description of the State. He said :

" But the most noble and profitable invention of all others was that of speech, whereby men register their thoughts ; recall them when they are past ; and also declare them one to another for mutual utility and conversation ; without which, there had been amongst men neither Commonwealth nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst lions, bears and wolves."

It is the invention of the Press, of the telegraph, of the cable, of the telephone, and their utilization for the instruction of humanity in what is actually happening in the world that makes possible the democratic state of to-day. Aristotle saw that clearly when he laid down quite definitely that it was impossible for any proper-functioning State to exist if the citizens exceeded such a limited number as might be known to one another. He said :

" How would it be possible for a State to consist of great multitudes ? Who is to be the

general of this multitude or its public crier if he has not the voice of a Stentor ? ”

Who is to disseminate the information ? The answer is : the Modern Press. Aristotle also said :

“ If then they are to determine questions of justice and distribute offices of State according to desert, it is necessary that the citizens should know each other’s character, for where this is not the case the distribution of offices and the judicial decisions will be wrong.”

Now it was possible to extend the limits of a state beyond the narrow confines contemplated by the Greek philosopher, provided the government of the expanding state should remain in the hands of a few. Without knowledge government is impossible. Knowledge, as every tyrant has known, is the only sure foundation of power, and the picturesque story of Haroun-al-Raschid spending his evenings as one of his subjects, disguised among the men and women, to know what they were saying, is typical of the need of an intelligence department, which every state has found by experience.

To-day the world is engaged in the great experiment of substituting the tyranny of the many for the tyranny of the few. Democratic government has come into the world. It is at present in its infancy, a great and wonderful experiment, the experiment of seeing whether it is possible for the controlled and orderly government of great multitudes to be carried out not by the few but by the many, to translate into practical politics the saying of Abraham Lincoln, “ Government of the people,

by the people, for the people shall not be banished from the earth." And when you try to establish democratic government upon a large scale, well, then, the thing is simply unthinkable unless some machinery can be devised whereby the many-headed multitude, who are to be masters, are at any rate to be informed on the matters which are the daily concern of government in their own country and as to affairs outside their own country—and by that I do not necessarily mean that they may be highly educated or have attained wisdom or even sagacity. Even in the limited rule of tyrannies and oligarchies, governments have been carried on by small bodies of men whose education was defective and whose sagacity and wisdom was very much to seek. Good government is another thing altogether. Before you can even discuss the question of good government, whether on the part of the few or the many, whether under an autocracy or under a democracy, you must first make government possible at all, and no kind of government—good, bad or indifferent—no orderly arrangement of the lives of men, of all the manifold activities and functions of a great state are possible without knowledge on the part of those who try to govern. The Press are the eyes, ears and tongues of the body politic of these monstrous states which now sprawl over the world, and their function is to collect facts and to present facts, facts which are necessary if the people of the country are to take any part in the government of their own country and which apart from that also add greatly to the pleasure of life's journey through this vale of tears. And these facts include things not merely that happen, but new thoughts. Ideas are facts just as much as suicides

or sudden wars, and the dissemination of facts with regard to science, art and literature, the progress of mankind, the recording of everything that interests and makes the many-coloured life of men and women in every land, that is the function of the Press.

I have already pointed out how easy it was in the small state of the older civilization, say, in Republican Rome before Rome tried to swell herself into a Cæsarian Empire, how easy it was in Athens or Rome for the citizen to keep himself informed of these matters. He did not learn philosophy by reading books, he learnt it by walking round the groves and listening to what the philosophers were saying. He learnt art by looking at the sculpture and the pictures, and, as regards government, he went into the Assembly and learnt there what they were doing. There is another feature of life also performed by the modern Press, a rather interesting feature, and that is the function which was played in the civilized life of Athens by the Drama. There is a very well-known passage in Aristotle in which he tells us that the function of the Greek drama was the presenting to mankind of all those complex phenomena of sentiment and emotion and passion, stories of the crimes and weaknesses, the emotions and the feelings of others which, as the Greek well knew, acts as a sort of safety-valve, so that instead of going out and relieving our emotions by committing crimes ourselves, we watch on the boards of the Athenian theatre the great tragedies of Sophocles or Euripides, and go away with what Aristotle calls a purgation, a catharsis of the passions. Our passions are purified and ennobled by what we have seen, and it was very necessary, Aristotle pointed

out, that the most beautiful tragedies should not be simple but complex and imitative of fearful and piteous actions.

That great function of Athenian civilized life seems to me to-day to have devolved on the Sunday Press (laughter). There we read stories of persons who have suffered things. There is a moral in every story, sometimes three months' hard labour, sometimes five years' penal servitude, but the great proletariat and the middle class will sit down with their Sunday breakfast to contemplate these beautiful stories (laughter)—and this serves a noble purpose. So also those great organs stand as a bulwark between rank revolution and anarchy, such as Russia is suffering from to-day. The Bolshevist revolution could never have reduced Russia to to-day's condition if there had been a popular Press. It happened because the people were so easily deceived. Just as one section of the Press stands to-day, although they do not get the gratitude they deserve, between sheer Bolshevism and the ordered life we lead, so I like to think of those other great organs of the Press engaged in purifying the emotions and ennobling the passions of the British people (laughter).

There are a good many other things I could say, but I know you have come here to hear Mr. Chesterton, and the more I say the more he will have to find fault with, and the less I say the less need there will be for first-aid after he has finished. But I should like, before I sit down, to say a word on the subject we are supposed to be discussing (laughter). Is modern journalism worth the price we pay for it? I think this is a most dangerous question. I do really. I hear there are some

editors on this platform and I see one important newspaper proprietor, and I think, if we really take the lid off and let the newspaper proprietors realize how entirely modern civilization, the organization of the modern state, the very existence of democracy, depends on the existence of their daily organs, they are very likely to put up the price. That is what I am afraid of, and that is why I have kept back to the last moment the few remarks I wanted to say on the subject—is it worth the price we pay for it? The great mistake a less experienced journalist and protagonist than Mr. Chesterton might make when he came to deal with that would be to deal with that case upon the actual merits of the Press as we have it to-day. Believe me, the miracle of the modern Press is not that it does things well or that it is informative or instructive, or that it gives “pep” and uplift to the whole of Society. No, the miracle is that it exists at all. Just as the great miracle of speech transformed man from a beast after he had been wandering about speechless for something like a million years, that miracle was not in the least diminished because when men did speak some spoke badly, some untruly, and some said things better not said at all. The great value of the Press is not how it performs these functions, but the amazing fact that a means has been found to make articulate this great conglomerate of human beings which makes up the modern state. That is the first essential in any progress in the life of ordered Society, and, on the question of whether it is worth it, I doubt whether one per cent. of the public have any idea of the tremendous labours that are involved in order to present daily for them this new miracle. I think sometimes in Fleet Street between the hours

of nine and twelve of those lines in "The Tempest" where Caliban says :

" . . . The isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and
hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears. . . ."

And they do. They bring news of every variety and every colour from every quarter of the inhabited and uninhabited globe, and a great body of men, with infinite skill and great assiduity in the service of the public, sift and collect it with incredible speed in order that a few hours afterwards it may be served up as what Mr. Kennedy Jones called a "modern sausage." I hope, at any rate, I have made out a *prima facie* case. I have done at any rate the important thing I came here to do—given Mr. Chesterton an excuse for putting forward the opposite side of the case (cheers).

MR. G. K. CHESTERTON said : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, my first duty is to express my sincere thanks for the very eloquent and philosophic language in which the opener of this discussion has described the journalism which might exist, and has acquainted you very accurately with the very noble, healthy and human functions which it does not perform (laughter). The simplest way in which I can deal with this subject would be simply to go through all those functions and to point out that through every one of them modern journalism in practice either misses its mark or betrays its trust. But there are one or two things I ought to allude to. The first point in his speech I cannot

allude to without grief bordering upon tears. (laughter). Mr. McCurdy is a legislator and a lawyer, he is a man of the first standing in the constitutional traditions of this country, and I say it with heartrending grief he has attempted a great transgression. He has done what is by universal agreement not permissible. He has dragged the Crown into controversy (laughter). I shall not follow him in that seditious and treasonable course. I am well aware that the heads of a modern constitutional monarchy exist chiefly to encourage the courtesies of life, and that when they speak of our institutions they very rightly speak of them in gracious and friendly terms, but they certainly have no intention of removing them from reasonable criticism by so doing. The second preliminary thing I should like to say is that, of course, in all such matters as this one must guard oneself first against exaggeration. There are still very good traditions in journalism, particularly, I think, in some of the longer established and more solid papers. There are a vast number of perfectly jolly and genuine, and, as men go, very honest men conducting that business. But when the opener speaks of journalism making mankind articulate I am inclined to reply that on the contrary journalism makes the greater part of mankind dumb, sometimes with mystification and in the more enlightened cases dumb with astonishment and fury (laughter).

But that little word articulate happens to be rather to the point. It was, I suppose, quite fifteen years ago or more that I began to be vaguely conscious of something which I think everybody who has been inside journalism knows perfectly well, and that is the enormous superiority of what jour-

nalists say to what they write (laughter). Let it not be supposed for a moment that in making this criticism this evening I am in any sense attacking the individuals of my own guild. On the contrary, I am trying to set before the world various talents of theirs which they from various forms of modesty at present hide. I assure you, when four or five journalists assemble in a tavern or some other place, their conversation is extraordinarily sensible, amusing and to the point. Nobody would suppose that from reading what they write. It will come to you as a shock, almost incredible, when I tell you that the man who writes a long and tiresome leading article telling you that he trusts we shall hear no more of the allegations against a Cabinet Minister, and so forth, that that same man the night before was telling extraordinarily funny stories about Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law. The inside of Fleet Street is a really interesting, living and informing place. It is, indeed, very like one of those small democratic communities which the opener has described when he gave his very clear and true account of how free and happy mankind were when they had no newspapers (laughter). It seems to me very pathetic that all this treasure of journalistic genius should be lost to the world, and it is as a matter of fact lost to the world. The newspapers do not discharge the kind of function of which the opener spoke. They are as a matter of fact very much behind the tone of ordinary conversation. Who is there in ordinary conversation who talks as if nobody could possibly bring a serious charge against a Cabinet Minister? Did you ever hear anybody say that in an omnibus, or a tram, or a club, or, I will add, in a pub? Nonsense of that

kind, petrified and antiquated nonsense of that kind is exclusively found in newspapers. It exists nowhere else. And all this has been in a sense put on one side with the greatest ingenuity and craft by the opener, because he has been describing not the newspapers that exist but certain ideal newspapers that might exist. If he imagines that my opposition to the Press or the opposition I represent on this occasion is a movement against the existence of any printing or any press or any circulated things, well, it certainly is not. I have every desire that there should be a really free, a really truthful, a really sincere, and a really courageous journalism, but I am talking about the Press that exists at the moment, which is the only one that can be considered on this occasion, because you cannot talk about journalism which does not exist and say it has a price and we can pay it. With regard to that Press I am prepared to maintain that it conspicuously fails to fulfil the functions mentioned. I have taken that point first of all because it is the best working test. Compare what people read in newspapers with what is said in ordinary conversation by the people who write in newspapers. The conversation in Fleet Street about politics is real conversation about real people. Newspaper accounts are entirely fictitious, they deal with imaginary people—somebody, for instance, called a Welsh Wizard, which is their way of describing a very astute and commercial politician of our day whose views are entirely of a practical, not to say materialistic kind, and so on.

Now when we come to the other sort of functions that were spoken of, I need not dwell upon the fact that the opener was in some sense compelled to end his own eulogy with a parody of his own position,

for I suppose none of us who enjoyed his beautiful irony on the subject of the purifying charter of the Sunday Press supposed either that he believed it or that we were in danger of believing it. And on the whole I think that passage would have been more effective in my speech than in his. But there is one little point out of it which I think is worth mentioning. In the course of his comparisons between the ancient village or city state and the modern press-ridden state—all of which comparisons were entirely to the advantage of the former—he said that Aristotle conceived tragedies as a purifying process and the great tragedies were to be tales of people that suffered or did wrong, and he suggested that the Greek tragedies might find their parallel in the accounts of divorce, crimes, and so on in the Sunday Press. The Greek drama by a very sound democratic instinct always conceived the most dangerous thing in the world to be safety. The Greek tragedy conceived the prince, the king, the great man, the ruler, swollen with a sense of safety and imagined a supreme calamity falling from the gods upon him. Now, none of our modern sensationalism has that character at all, for the one very simple reason that in the modern world no powerful man ever is punished, not even the Kaiser, and one reason why no powerful man ever is punished in the modern world, as they were punished by scores in the old republics and monarchies, is because the Press in its nature and by its tone conceals the real character of modern politics. The opener began with some allusion to someone who expects the Press to be a divinity guiding us to higher truths, and so on, but I would submit that I have no extravagant demands to make of the Press. I have no demands for that

Press that leads men to higher truths. I ask for one that speaks the truth, and I do not get it.

Let me take one perfectly simple example. Everybody in any way within the remotest touch of modern politics or modern journalism has been talking for about fifteen years about the fact that the Party funds are not audited, and that peerages are bought and sold. They began talking about it long before a whisper of it appeared in the Press. Nothing more than a whisper of it ever did appear in the Press. If you want to know a really sensational event in the modern world I will tell you one. It is my difficulty, of course, that the very silence of the Press protects itself. If the opener were to say to me, "Give me an example of a great event that the Press suppressed," and I were to give you such an example you would say, "I have never heard of it" (laughter). But I will give you one which was not a question of suppression. It could not be suppressed because it was said in the House of Commons. But its importance was entirely ignored, and that is the perfectly simple fact that the present Prime Minister of this country, a very honest man as politicians go (laughter)—had to make a speech in the House of Commons on the subject of the sale of peerages and similar things, and had to touch—he touched very briefly—on the existence of Party funds and the proposal to have them audited, and what he said was in substance, "I do not believe it is any good having a rule that we should audit the Party funds, because it would always be evaded." That is, properly speaking, the most astounding remark in the history of modern Europe. The representative of the great Senate of a great nation, defending its honour against charges of corruption

and of treachery, did not say, "There is not a word of truth in these things," or did not say, "I will fight the man who said so to-morrow morning," as he would have said in the Eighteenth Century; but he said, "We must go on doing these things, and we shall, and if you make a law to prevent us we shall cheat the law somehow," or if he did not say it of himself at least he said it of his colleagues. In other words, he said that the modern politician is passionately attached to trickery and secrecy, and, even if there were passed a rule that an audit should take place, he would find some means, like an ordinary swindling financier, to evade it. When I read that remark I was thoroughly surprised. But it had no effect on the leader writers in the newspapers; it was apparently regarded as a very ordinary thing. I am not going to labour that particular example.

What are Party funds? Each of the parties that alternately used to govern and practically do still govern this country wields an enormous mass of money with which it runs elections, propaganda, and finances individual men when it gets that money in various ways. Nobody knows in what ways and nobody knows from whom. It is the only responsible institution in the world, at least in our world, that is not subjected to some kind of audit. Mention the proposal that there shall be an audit, and that is the kind of answer you get. There might be, in that very powerful mass of money, money from traitors or enemies of the country for all anybody knows. There is a perfectly simple plain issue. A certain number of people, of whom I was one, got up and asked: Why cannot we audit these accounts? And the leader of the great and in-

telligent English Parliament replies : " If you did audit them, they would only cheat you again." If it were really true that newspapers made everybody know what was important about their own Government, explained to the public what were the great questions which they had to decide, don't you think you would have heard a little more about that very simple question ? As a matter of fact, practically nothing has been said about it, and nothing whatever was said about it until a very few individuals forced it upon the world, until about fifteen or twenty years after it was a subject of conversation in every club. That is the articulate voice of England. The opener spoke of giving eyes and ears and of journalism being the organ of speech. As he was speaking certain very ancient words came into my mind, " Eyes have they, and see not ; ears have they, and hear not." That, if you like, is a description of the great modern State in its present condition, and I thoroughly agree with the opener when he rhetorically described it as a monstrous state.

I will take only two more examples. Not only have we this close, this vivid knowledge of our own politics through journalism, when we are not even allowed to ask who pays for the running of either of the great parties, but we are also illumined with omniscience on the subject of foreign countries. I would like to ask any reasonable man one question : " Has he not of late years noticed a certain kind of thing happening of which perhaps the best description is to say he has had a series of surprises ? " Things happened in the world outside England which were as unexpected as an explosion. Nothing in our Press or public opinion in consequence had prepared us for them.

There are an endless number of examples, but one obvious one. Did the ordinary British public understand, or have anything to do with, or know anything about, the extraordinary business of Ireland? Were we so well acquainted with what was going on in Ireland or of the relations between Ireland and England that we all said, "Yes, of course, that would be the development"? The truth is that the whole thing was absolutely unintelligible to the vast mass of ordinary English people. What was the part played by this enlightened and omniscient Press? The part played was that Michael Collins was described as a murderous assassin on Monday, and as a great patriot on Tuesday. Quite suddenly we were told that people the Press had described as villains and rebels were the saviours of their country. That was not explained, nor the facts leading up to it. I am putting it from the point of view of anybody taking either side. I was always on the Irish side. I thought, and still think, that the Irish ought to govern themselves. But I also have a certain taste for the English governing themselves. And in order that the English may govern themselves I suggest that they should have some sort of remote information of what their rulers are up to. I defy anybody to say that anybody had the remotest information of what our rulers were up to on that occasion. What happened is too big and too tragic for me to go into. But no coherent story was told by the Press. People got glimpses of it in other ways, through friends in Ireland and parallels in European cases of all kinds, but I undertake to say that nobody could possibly make any sort of intelligible story out of anything they read in the mass of the papers.

Take another case. The opener has himself referred to the case of Russia. He has given a picture which was always very pleasing, I am afraid, to the British public, of Russia suffering from not having the exquisite pleasure of possessing the "Daily Mail" or the "Daily Express," and therefore going to pieces entirely in consequence because people were so easily deceived. I venture to dispute a great deal of that history of the Russian affair. On one point I should like to dwell. If we had a Press that really did know what was going on in the rest of the world, which really was enlightening us about foreign conditions, just as it would have made an enormous point about the business of Party funds, so it would have made an enormous point of the story of the Russian peasants in Russian history. The really big and important thing about the Russian story was not the success of Bolshevism, but the failure of Bolshevism. Bolshevism broke down before the stubbornness, the simplicity, the tenacity of the mass of Russian peasants who had no newspapers, had no kind people telling them which politician to admire, or to admire in one day and curse in the next, but they had a few other important trifles such, for instance, as land to live on, stuff to grow out of it, a religion, a readiness to fight, a few other things that have made up some parts of human life, and these people brought Bolshevism to its real moral end, forbade it to extend over all Russia beyond the cities, simply by refusing to give up the ancient tradition of private property in land. If you really had an enlightening Press it would have told you all that story. As it is, instead of breaking down Bolshevism as the peasants do, we can do nothing but rail against Bolshevism. I will

submit that all these things are things that the people ought to be told, and would be told if there was a real Press. They would be told why we failed in Ireland, why we had to make such a sudden change of policy, why the Bolsheviks were brought to a standstill, who brought them to a standstill, and what is the moral. And I suppose one would not deny that these things would be of some interest, even of some sensational interest, to the mass of the people. They were crowded out, of course. There is not room for everything, and who knows, if we had been told the truth about these things, we might have missed some event in the life of Mr. Mutt and Mr. Jeff. If we had really known why the peasants conquered the Socialists, or why Ireland finally became sundered from this country, we might have had to put up with ten, or perhaps only eight pictures of the ladies who paddle at Ramsgate (laughter). We might not have had a whole page of one of those elevating Sunday papers devoted to the views of Miss Jane Burr, on why she wears trousers, or we might have missed that essentially national and English question of which is the particular young lady in some suburb or other an American film actress thinks the prettiest. All these things we might have missed, perhaps, and in return we should have only had the commonplace ordinary knowledge of our own affairs and the affairs of the world, which we do not possess at present.

In conclusion, I do not deny that the Press may be worth the price we pay for it, if by that we mean the actual price for it out of our pockets—a penny. A penny may be a small sum for a toy, but it is not quite such an intelligent thing as a toy bought in the Strand, because they last several days. Nobody

ever reads a paper twice. But there is another price—the bewilderment of the English people and the failure of the English power (cheers).

VISCOUNT BURNHAM said : We are all of us much obliged to Mr. McCurdy and Mr. Chesterton for enabling us to pass a pleasant hour, and, on behalf of the Educational Auxiliary Committee, I wish to return to them our sincere thanks. I also feel that after the speeches to which we have listened there is nobody in this hall who will not be able to go to the neighbourhood in which he or she dwells and deliver a lecture on the Newspaper Press (laughter). Personally, when I hear lectures on the Press, I think how much more the lecturer knows than I do (laughter). I have to read a great multitude of papers. I always think that those to whom I listen have the good fortune only to be forced to read the papers they like most, or dislike most. It is a great advantage to them, but it ought to inspire you with pity for those who have to read so many, and I am bound to say that if you do it for forty years, as I have done, there is hardly an opinion on anything under the sun that you won't have to read at some time or another. Therefore to say that nothing has been thundered or lightened upon one thing or another is almost a charge against omniscience itself. Be that as it may, probably we, like other people, have got the Press we deserve, and that I suppose is sufficient for most of us.

We have to thank the Press for something. They have enabled us to fill these halls and therefore to hear a great deal that has been profitable to us in a true sense, and, I hope, profitable to them. I thank the newspapers particularly for having given

their assistance to our Hospital Fund, and thank you for having by your presence contributed to our success.

MR. ROBERT BINGHAM : I have been requested to express the thanks of the audience, which I am sure we all feel, to our Chairman for the part he has played in bringing about such an extraordinarily interesting discussion this afternoon, informing and interesting, and right on the part of Mr. McCurdy, and charming and interesting if not right, on the part of Mr. Chesterton, and it gives me great pleasure on your behalf to thank Lord Burnham (cheers).

LORD BURNHAM bowed his acknowledgments.

LECTURE VI

Main Street and High Street

MAJOR BEITH ("IAN HAY")

MR. SINCLAIR LEWIS

Chairman : SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE
(in the absence of Mr. Justice Darling)

SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE : Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very sorry to say that I am not Mr. Justice Darling. I shall not, therefore, be able to say anything either to instruct or amuse you, but, as the Director of this School, I have been forced very much against my will, into the Chair. I hold that the right place for a Chairman is the Chair, and not on his feet, and, therefore, I am only going in two words to introduce the protagonists in this discussion to-day. I hope that, by the time I have finished, Mr. Justice Darling, who is coming, will have arrived and he will be able to keep them apart. I have first to introduce Major Beith, whom I think all of you have met as "Ian Hay." On my left is Mr. Sinclair Lewis, whom we also have all met, the author of "Main Street," and of various other books which perhaps we do not know so well. I am sure we are delighted above all to welcome Mr. Sinclair Lewis, because he comes from the other side of the Atlantic. I have not the vaguest idea myself what the discussion is about—High

Street and Main Street—and I am going to ask Major Beith to open it.

MAJOR BEITH : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, a fellow countryman of mine once announced his intention, in lines which I expect are familiar to most of us, of taking the high road on the understanding that some other person unnamed would take the low road—with the result that somebody was going to get to Scotland before somebody else. In the same way, this afternoon, I propose to take High Street and Mr. Sinclair Lewis will take Main Street. May I say how honoured I feel to be associated with Mr. Sinclair Lewis on that literary excursion? My only regret is that we are going to make it by different roads, and shall not see as much of each other as we should like. Our theme is High Street and Main Street. Now what exactly does that profound piece of symbolism denote? Well, to me it denotes the difference between romance and realism, between sentiment and the hard facts of life—between, we will say, Cranford and Gopher City. You will say rightly that this is an arbitrary division. We have no monopoly in this country of sweet sentiment. Neither have they all the horse sense in America. You cannot draw a hard and fast line between the literature of our two countries. The works of Charles Dickens are more widely read in the United States than in the land of his birth. Yet each of our countries does possess characteristics of its own which divide us on the surface quite sharply, and these differences are bound to be reflected in our literature, especially in our fiction.

For example, the kind of hero an author selects

for his book must depend to a large extent on the author's nationality. In this country we still cherish a sneaking affection for a hero with aristocratic connections. When I say we, I mean us—I mean the majority of the book-reading public, the circulating library and the bookstall public. In these ultra-democratic days it is true our hero need not necessarily be a duke, but he must be sufficiently well-connected, say, to get into the Royal Enclosure at Ascot without wangling. In America they rather lean to the self-made hero, the man who starts life in some simple, unpretentious, 100 per cent. calling, such as a farmer's boy in Nebraska, who ultimately becomes rich and creates periodical panics on Wall Street. American novelists fight rather shy of the aristocratic hero. I am afraid they do not think much of the aristocracy. I have discovered in the Far West that they cherish a fixed theory, strongly reinforced by over-attendance at the moving pictures, that an English peer is invariably a rather vacant, languid, drawling creature with a long moustache, who wears a monocle and drops all his h's. There you see the danger of generalization. I have frequently pointed out that though there are many English peers who wear monocles, and many English peers, of more recent vintage, who drop their h's, there is probably no English peer in existence who does both (laughter).

So you see, it is extremely difficult for us to get one another's exact point of view. The reason is that although we think alike about the big things, about the deep fundamentals, justice and freedom and religion and truth, on the surface our two nations are opposed to a most extraordinary extent. Let me try to illustrate to you what I mean by

mentioning one or two superficial differences which appear to make us so unlike one another. In the first place, the American is a gregarious animal who loves company. On the whole we do not. We rather pride ourselves on keeping ourselves to ourselves. I always remember about 1918, during the last few months of the war, I met a young American soldier on leave in the streets of London. I got into conversation with him, and asked him the usual obvious question, "How do you like London?" He said, "I have been in London three days and nights, and you are the first living creature who has spoken to me." How was I going to explain to that lonely homesick American boy—and they were the most lonely soldiers in the world in those days; they had never been away from home before—how was I to explain to him that English people never speak to one another, that they hate being spoken to, and that a man may live for ten years in the same street in London without knowing the people next door—and proud of it? Brought up as he had been in a little Western town in America where everybody knew everybody else, he would have thought I was a liar, and might possibly have said so. But it is true. Whether it is due to shyness, or laziness, or fear of rebuff, it is true. But to quote an example. What is an Englishman's real ambition in life? It is to get a railway compartment to himself (laughter). If you travel by train in America you travel in a long open coach with sixty or seventy seats, with people seated two and two, and everybody talks to his neighbour as a matter of common courtesy. In fact, if you are in a seat by yourself with nobody to talk to you, some kind-hearted soul will leave his own seat,

come to your chair, and devote the next three hours—or three days—to telling you the story of his life (laughter).

What do we do over here? We begin by selecting an empty compartment. If possible we get ourselves locked in. If anybody invades our privacy do we say, "Good morning," or tell the story of our life? No, we put up a newspaper barrage for the rest of the journey. Take an office or place of business. In America all the members of the firm work together in one great hall. There are very few private rooms and very few partitions, and, if so, they are made of glass or are only table-high, so that there is plenty of light, air, and publicity. What do we do over here in an office, bank, or place of business? The head of the firm is confined in a private hutch of his own. The second in command has another. It is true that a dozen clerks may have to work together in a room, but each is sustained by one hope and ambition—to achieve honourable confinement in a hutch of his own some day. That is one point. Here is another. The American, like the Athenian of old, is ever seeking a new thing. When he comes in contact with a man who knows, a man who possesses certain special knowledge or skill in any particular subject, he thinks it only right and sensible to draw that man out on his subject. In dealing with an Englishman he very often draws a blank—a blank stare, or possibly polite evasion. What the American does not realize is that Englishmen are brought up from their public school boyhood in mortal dread of the deities, "side" and "shop." It is "side" to talk about your work or your ambitions or your wife. The other bogey, "shop," is an even more

terrific monster. Never under any circumstances must you talk about a subject on which you are particularly fitted to discourse. It comes to this. The more you know about a thing, the less you say about it, and, the more passionately you are interested in it, the more witheringly you refer to it. This custom, which has its merits, certainly handicaps you as a conversationalist, and is apt to make an American feel that an Englishman is either stupid or rude. As a rule he is neither.

This brings us to the third point of difference. The American is by profession an optimist—a born booster. He believes in advertising; he believes that, if you have got the goods, you had better talk about them; and he believes in increasing and improving his business by every means in his power, or, indeed, in helping along every case in which he is interested, without considering whether it is the right moment or not. In 1918 I was attached to the American Army in the Argonne Forest, and was waiting for an American Staff car which the authorities were sending for me. I saw an American military car drive up, and, not being quite sure if it had come from the place I wanted, I said to the chauffeur, "Where are you from?" He stood up and said, his eyes flashing, "I am from Marion, Ohio, the greatest steam-shovel producing centre in the world." His first instinct was to give the old home town a lift-up. There is another story, for the absolute truth of which I do not vouch, of a funeral party in Los Angeles. The officiating clergyman was late in arriving, and a rather painful wait ensued among the mourners, who sat round the remains of the deceased in the front parlour. Finally, the chief mourner suggested that some-

body might like to stand up and offer some observations on the virtues of the late lamented. Presently a dark-looking stranger stood up and said, "As no one seems to want to say anything about the corpse, I should like to offer a few observations about real estate prospects in the Los Angeles district" (laughter).

If the American is a born booster, the Englishman is a born knocker. He likes to surround himself with an atmosphere of self-depreciation. He knocks everything, including himself. If he engages in conversation with a stranger he begins by belittling his own country, his own Government, his own people. He disparages his native town and his own relations, he announces with gloomy satisfaction that the British Empire is going to the dogs, and that *Punch* is not so funny as it used to be. If the American stranger shows any tendency to associate himself with these sentiments the Englishman makes it clear that he neither desires nor expects any assistance. By another curious habit of mind, if you detect him in a good deed, he hastily ascribes to himself the worst possible motive for having performed that deed. If an Englishman jumps overboard after a drowning man he will explain that he does so because the man owes him ninepence. That is an Englishman's excuse. Of course, you might retaliate by saying that it is a Scotsman's reason ! (laughter).

So you see, where two men of different nationalities, a Briton and an American, set out to write, one about Main Street and the other about High Street, their lines of action are bound to diverge. May I come down to a personal instance? Supposing Mr. Sinclair Lewis and myself were to sit down and

endeavour to write a novel on the same theme. What differences should we find in those two completed novels? Well, of course, they would vary very much in actual merit. Mr. Lewis's novel would be very good indeed, while mine perhaps might be—rather better (laughter). But that is not what I mean. The outstanding point of difference would be this, that Mr. Lewis's novel would be absolutely devoid of sentiment of any kind, while mine would absolutely reek with sentiment. That does not mean at all that I am a sentimental person while he is not. We are both intensely sentimental, because both our nations are sentimental nations. But the difference is that, while Americans are frankly and rightly sentimental, the Englishman would rather be burnt at the stake than give expression to sentiment of any kind. A man of this sort must have a safety-valve or he would burst, and the Englishman's chief safety-valve is writing or reading about sentiment. He is much too shy and self-conscious to say anything sentimental with any ease, or listen to it. But you put him in a corner with a ream of foolscap and a bottle of ink and see what he will write, and see the thousands of people who will read it, buy it, and send for more! A person like myself when he writes a sentimental novel is performing a work of necessity and mercy for his fellow countrymen. Mr. Lewis is equally patriotic. He is a shrewd student of human nature, a very impartial observer of his own people, and he considers that the American's excess of sentimentality ought to be corrected, so he writes *Main Street*. We are both working for the same end.

Since I find myself this afternoon in High Street I want to make a general plea for the thing

that High Street really stands for—old-fashioned romanticism. Romanticism is not popular to-day among the elect; but, after all, this world is and always will be ruled in the main by men's hearts and not by men's heads. You would not be sitting here this afternoon listening to me for the sake of the hospitals if that were not so; and if that were not so hospitals would be State-provided, like asylums and gaols; or probably there would be no hospitals at all, but just lethal chambers. I want to make a plea for the romantic novel, the improbable novel, the novel about things that are supposed to go on in High Street, as opposed to the things we know go on in Main Street. I sometimes think we allow our zeal for lofty standards to eat us up. There is need for all kinds of literature, and, if there is one form that ought to be encouraged in these rather gloomy days, it is the literature of recreation. In my humble opinion the author who can bring a smile to the face of the world for five minutes a day just now ought to be endowed, subsidized, and handsomely pensioned. The literature of recreation may be easy to read; but it is not easy to write. Quite the reverse. To write nonsense, real, human, healthy, healthful nonsense, calls for two rather unexpected qualifications—genuine brains and a certain seriousness of character. Lewis Carroll, one of the greatest masters of nonsense that ever lived, was himself a clergyman and a mathematician. Stephen Leacock, that master of nonsense, is in his lighter moments a professor of economics, such as some of you are going to be. But some of our stern literary purists will have nothing of this at all. They cherish two beliefs. One of these is that lightness of touch spells insincerity, and the

other is that in order to deal faithfully with life you have got to be thoroughly morbid about it. I am not referring here to Mr. Sinclair Lewis. Nobody ever accused him of being morbid. I am referring to less distinguished inhabitants of Main Street, the School which asks you not only to get below the surface, but to wallow there. There is a perfect mania to-day, not only in our own country but in America and all over the world, for what I call the literature of disgruntlement. You know the kind of book I mean. It deals at enormous length with the whole career, from the cradle to the grave, of some of the most uninteresting people that ever lived. It rubs in the unchanging routine, the dull monotony, the eternal pettiness of human nature, the general hopelessness of everything. You read it and say to yourself, "This is the kind of life I lead! These are the kind of people I associate with! How terrible life is!"

Even the nursery is not spared. There are people going about just now solemnly advocating that children's heads should not be stuffed with fairy tales. They have got to go below the surface, too. Just imagine what these people would do with Cinderella! A common scheming little husband-hunter! That is all she was! And her two sisters—a pair of temperamental spinsters full of complexes and inhibitions! The Prince, a self-indulgent egoist, who would bully his kitchen-maid of a wife a month after marriage (laughter).

To these people the sordid book must be good because it is true to life. There I most respectfully beg to differ. Life is what we make it, and if the majority of men and women made life sordid this world could not go on. But it does go

on, and I cannot help feeling that this world would have given up long ago if there had not been more beauty and unselfishness in life, as lived by the average hard-working man and woman, than this disgruntled School would have us believe. And therefore I think people ought to be encouraged now and again to read books dealing with life as we would like it to be rather than as it is, because books of that kind do help people to carry on. But it all comes down to one test in the end, the test of sincerity. So long as a man writes what is in him, what he really feels, not merely writing to tap a profitable market, then that man has the root of the matter in him. There is a saying, I think it is Johnson's, that a book should help us either to enjoy life or to endure it. You do not always require a whole book for the purpose. If you or I can add to the common stock a single page or line or thought that will live, that will help our fellow-men to enjoy life a little more fully, or endure it a little more easily, then I say that between us, whether we live in High Street or Main Street, we shall have done something really worth while (cheers).

THE CHAIRMAN : I now call on Mr. Sinclair Lewis to say what can be said for Main Street.

(NOTE.—*We much regret that we are not permitted to publish Mr. Sinclair Lewis's salutary and entertaining rejoinder. Mr. Lewis, in his modesty, considers unworthy of permanence words uttered without that degree of preparation which he accords to his printed works.*—EDITOR).

SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE : I think it will be in accordance with your desires that I should allow Major Beith to reply to Mr. Sinclair Lewis, to make what the lawyers call a rebutter. I have unfortunately to make the announcement that Mr. Justice Darling is confined to his house with a severe cold and is forbidden by his doctor to come out into the balm of this English spring (laughter). Unfortunately, then, the clergyman is not present, and I, in the part of chief mourner or other person, have got to make a few remarks on real estate. I think the real estate on which I am most inclined to make remarks is the boiler which ought to heat this building. That boiler burst a few days ago and that is why, if any of you are feeling cold, you are feeling cold.

I am only going to say one thing about the lecture, and one on the subject on which you have been addressed. As to the difference between Romance and Realism, I imagine that obviously there is a market for both these kinds of novels. I think we all turn to the romantic novel when we want to learn about the sort of person we should like to meet, and never have, and turn to the realistic novel when we want to know what our relations are like and comfort ourselves in seeing all their foibles and weaknesses displayed. We hope Mr. Sinclair Lewis will continue to be realistic, and Major Beith to be romantic, so that in one mood or other we may always find the novels we want.

As to America and England, I am very sorry that Mr. Sinclair Lewis has entirely failed to dispel one of the illusions we have about America—that American lecturers were humorous. He failed to prove that Mr. Sinclair Lewis is incapable of humour.

Next time he wants to prove that, he will have to come and lecture us on, say, foreign exchanges or some other subject, but I am afraid he would make even that entertaining. But he was right about at least one difference between the Americans and the English. I think we in England are at least as well satisfied with ourselves as the Americans can be, but we are more complacent about it, we do not say so much about ourselves (laughter). I think we think more of ourselves than we let on, and I think possibly that sometimes the Americans do say more about themselves in their conversation than they really think. Also, just because we in this country are so well pleased with ourselves, we are not really very sensitive to criticism. I do sometimes think that Americans are unduly sensitive to criticism by English people. None of us attaches any importance to the sort of criticism of which Mr. Sinclair Lewis has complained. It need not be taken that that sort of remark is anything that, if it had been said of ourselves, we should mind, and he need not mind it as representing anything of importance (cheers).

As far as I am concerned, there are lots of things which the American State does which personally I do not care about, but whenever I meet an American I do care about him very much indeed. However we differ, we really do feel that we care about each other very much indeed (cheers).

MAJOR BEITH : I do not propose to reply to Mr. Sinclair Lewis because, after the aspersions on my private character with which he opened his discourse, I feel the only course open to me is to go home and consult my solicitor (laughter). But I have just

one thing to say. The real difficulty of Anglo-American relations will always be this—the fact that we possess a common language. If you are looking for trouble it is easier to start it with someone whose language you know than with one whose language you do not know. That is why we get on so well with the Chinese. We must always be careful of that particular danger, and behave ourselves accordingly with decency and forbearance, and do our best to let one another alone (cheers).

PROFESSOR WINIFRED CULLIS proposed a vote of thanks to the lecturers and chairman.



Camera Portrait by E. O. HOPPE

Mr. PHILIP GUEDALLA



LECTURE VII

Biographers and Their Victims

MR. A. G. GARDINER

MR. PHILIP GUEDALLA

Chairman :

RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH, K.C., M.P.

MR. ASQUITH : Ladies and Gentlemen, I am here to-night, I am glad to say, in the character not of a speaker but of chairman, and we are going to hear a discourse which I trust may develop into a duel between Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Guedalla, on the very fruitful and highly controversial topic of "Biographers and their victims." I now ask Mr. Gardiner to speak.

MR. A. G. GARDINER : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Asquith has suggested that Mr. Guedalla and I are to debate in a competitive mood on this subject. I may mention to you, as a secret strictly between ourselves, that Mr. Guedalla and I did have a private meeting a little time ago with the idea of arranging some sort of terms for this sham fight, and we came, I am afraid, to the conclusion that it was rather a difficult subject to fight about. But we have agreed that at all events it is our business to be as provocative and indeed unpleasant to each other as decency

permits. We are here to represent that portion of the criminal classes who write biographies. Well, the worst thing that can be said about biographies and biographers is that they are an impertinence and the best thing that can be said about them is that they are a necessary impertinence. Lincoln once said that the Almighty never made one people good enough to rule another, and I think it is perhaps equally true that he never made one man wise enough to pass judgment upon another. Man is a very complex animal, compact of such mingled yarn, good and ill together, that you may get almost any result that you choose, from almost any subject.

I was reminded of this this morning when I was reading my newspaper. I suppose all of you remember that great character, Boss Croker, of New York. He stands in history as, I daresay, the most corrupt and successfully corrupt politician that ever ruled New York or, indeed, any modern city. And yet, in a newspaper this morning, I was reading the evidence in a case about his will, which is being heard in Dublin, and his widow, Mrs. Croker, was in the witness box, and she said this : " In addition to all the beautiful things that have been testified to about my husband by the previous witnesses, I have to add this, that my husband was a saint " (laughter).—Well, if it is possible to have a career such as the career which we understand Mr. Croker lived in New York and still to be from a certain angle viewed as a saint, it is quite apparent that the possibilities of the biographer are very great and very diverse indeed. That brings me to the question of what is the spirit in which the biographer should approach his task, and here I

should like to say that I am not responsible for the title of this debate. That title rather suggests that Mr. Guedalla and I are two executioners planted one on each side of a potential victim (loud laughter)—and ready to apply the thumbscrew and the stake when—far off may the time be—the opportunity arises. That view of the biographer I should like personally to disclaim. I think it suits Mr. Guedalla very well. I have been reading that very brilliant book which he wrote on Napoleon III, and I am bound to say that for the first time in my life I felt a little sympathy for Napoleon III, and I felt also a passing hope that I should outlive Mr. Guedalla lest he should be tempted to say kind things about me, for I believe that Mr. Guedalla in that book does intend to be kind, but if that is the best he can do I hope he won't be kind towards anyone I love.

The question then is what should be the attitude of the biographer to his subject—I won't say his victim—and the point I will put before Mr. Guedalla, for I am only here to start the hares for his nimble wit to pursue, is that you should be friendly and do your best for him, not misrepresenting the truth of course, but choosing a subject in which your sympathies are engaged. I am not speaking for the official biographer. He—I know him well—is only a tradesman. He undertakes a job as any other undertaker takes a job, to perform the obsequies of the deceased decently and in order, to wear crepe, and a large hat-band, and drop a few tears by the way. He is bound to be civil to his victim or subject and is bound, I think, in decency to make out the best possible case he can for him on all the issues that arise. His position, in fact, is rather barristerial. But, putting aside that official type of

biography and coming to the case where the question is open to the author himself as to what subject he will take up and how he will treat it, I would suggest that on the whole the best results are those in which the biographer believes in his subject and, indeed, grows a little ecstatic over him.

On this point you will naturally recall the most famous case in all the literature of biography—Boswell's "Life of Johnson." Beyond all comparison I suppose that is the most famous, and I think the most wonderful piece of biography in the English language, and it is conceived throughout in a spirit of adoration. And yet the total effect of that great monument is to present Johnson as possibly the most living and moving figure that appears in the literature of biography. Or take the case of Carlyle. Carlyle never took up any subject for biography so far as I can recall in which he was not cordially and even enthusiastically in sympathy with the subject, and, though there are grave defects no doubt in Carlyle's literary method, we should all agree that it is a method of great force and impressiveness. It would be a mistake to attempt to repeat his *tour de force*, but I still think his biographies have that quality of permanence and vitality that places them high among the triumphs of the biographical art.

Then, at the other extreme, you have the other method, illustrated in the present day by Mr. Lytton Strachey. Mr. Strachey is the prince of chefs in the literary kitchen. Whether he deals with a king or a cardinal he serves up his subject done to a turn (laughter)—and as far as I know we have nothing better in the way of satire or the satirical method than the work with which he

has delighted the reading public. But at the same time I would suggest that satire, the satirical approach, is not on the whole a sufficient basis for good biography, and that *Eminent Victorians*, for example, could be very reasonably pulled to pieces on that account. There are four biographies in the book and I think it can fairly be said of only one of them that it is really convincing, a fair all-round picture of the subject that the writer deals with. The other three are too definitely treated in a hostile manner as subjects for rather brilliant cynicism and satire. If you contrasted them, for example, with that famous biographer, Plutarch, I think you would have to confess that Plutarch's method is infinitely more successful for the purpose of the biographer—a fairly true presentation of the subject he has in mind. Or if you contrast it with some of those Macaulay wrote—that for instance on Warren Hastings, which has always seemed to me a balanced presentment arrived at after just and proper consideration—I think you would have to give the prize to him who treats his subject in a fairly just and dispassionate way and presents the contours of the theme in all their roundness and fulness. That is the first point I would put before Mr. Guedalla to deal with.

Then, I further suggest that positive enthusiasm for an idea is very often the basis of the best biography. For example, it was Carlyle's enthusiasm for government by the strong man that led him to that very great achievement, "The Life and Letters of Oliver Cromwell." For two hundred years Cromwell had lain under what Carlyle called "the guano droppings of two centuries," and Carlyle disinterred him and placed him before the mind in a

way in which he had never appeared since his death. That, I think, is one of the greatest works of restoration that has ever been accomplished in the field of biography. Or take another case. Froude repainted Henry VIII, largely, I think, because of his hostility to the Oxford movement and enthusiasm for the Reformation. That, again, was a piece of work which everyone familiar with the theme thinks was astonishingly well worth doing. Of course, it is true that, in repainting Henry VIII, he made him so kindly and saintly a character that you almost see the halo round his head. I do not believe in the halo, but I would suggest that Froude did something to make Henry VIII an understandable person and not quite the ogre he had been for three centuries.

There is one other point on which I should like to provoke Mr. Guedalla, and that would be on the question of the extent to which the writer is entitled to introduce his own personality into his subject. Every biography like every good picture is, of course, a portrait of two persons—the writer and his subject. In the case of the great book to which I referred first, Boswell's "Life of Johnson," it would be almost impossible to deny that the figure of Boswell shares the limelight with his subject, and judging from that one might assume that it is quite proper and good for a writer to play a large part and to appear a great deal in company with his subject. But, while that may be true of quite exceptional personalities and cases, I should lay down or suggest as a general proposition, that it is wiser for the average biographer to appear as little as possible definitely and specifically in person in his own book, that his criticism, his own point of view

should be as much subordinated as possible and that he should not endeavour to share the limelight with his victim. I think in that respect you would agree that Lockhart's "Life of Scott" is a perfect piece of work. Lockhart certainly does appear in that book, but it is rather in the sense of a watchful, vigilant figure in the background, keeping a restraint upon his own emotions and views and subordinating himself to his subject, and the feeling you have throughout that book is that his treatment is very wise and just and a perfect model, perhaps a little austere, of a high type of biography.

Before I finish I must say one word, I think, as to the victims. That word would be this, that they have the matter very largely in their own hands. The great and eminent who desire to rest peacefully in their graves and to present a tolerably fair front to posterity should carve their own tombstones. They should write their own biographies. Many people have done it, and done it with brilliant success. I do not think there is any fact in the life of that remarkable man, Cæsar, which gives me greater respect for him than that he took care to be his own reporter to posterity. And, while I am on the subject of Cæsar, my mind naturally reverts to Mr. Winston Churchill (laughter). He has also taken care that nothing shall be left to chance. And I think he is a very wise man indeed (laughter). He has done it astonishingly well and I hope others will do it also. I think that the art of self-portraiture is one of the most difficult, but also, when well done, one of the most successful achievements in literature. I think the proportion of successful autobiographies is infinitely higher than the proportion of successful biographies. And the remarkable thing is that the

person who sets out to tell his own story gets himself presented to the world even though he intends to deceive and even though his method is that of lies.

Take for example, the great case of Benvenuto Cellini. You can hardly believe a word he says, and yet the man lives in the most astonishing way in that wonderful swaggering autobiography he wrote. I think Franklin's is also in some ways one of the most penetrating and convincing portraits to be found in literature. Finally, there is the supreme case of Samuel Pepys. He beyond comparison is the most living thing to be found in books. We all know him better than we know our next door neighbour simply from the fact that he sat down each night to write the life of the day, and there is no other achievement comparable to it in literature. And perhaps you will agree that when posterity comes to look back upon these troubled times there is no figure which will appear more vividly before its eyes than the distinguished lady beside me (Mrs. Asquith) who took the precaution of writing her own biography. I commend that example to the Chairman, and with these remarks I will make way for Mr. Guedalla.

MR. GUEDALLA : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I think it is not inappropriate, as you are met this afternoon in the cause of suffering, that you should listen to two lectures rather than to one. And let me say at the outset that, so far as suffering is concerned, it is going to hurt me far more than you, and far more than it hurts Mr. Gardiner ; because the excellent and disinterested organizers of this peculiar contest, which would so resemble a bull fight but for the haunting un-

certainty as to which is the bull and which the matador, have displayed a positively Chinese ingenuity of torture. I am asked to present myself in an attitude of disagreement, and if possible offensive disagreement, with my first editor in the presence of the leader of my Party. In theory no situation could be more delightful. It is like being asked by the Home Secretary to set booby traps for policemen (laughter). But in practice and reality I find the situation frankly alarming ; and I do find it a matter of some difficulty to disagree with my friend, Mr. Gardiner, because it so happens that about almost everything in public affairs we both of us agree sincerely with the Chairman. I imagine that their selection was made for another reason. We all know that statesmen get the biographers they deserve (laughter). You will observe that the life of Mr. Chamberlain is being written by Mr. Garvin ; and Liberal statesmen (perhaps it is a just retribution) apparently deserve Liberal biographers. Mr. Gardiner has given us Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Spender is busy on the life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ; and I imagine that the selection this afternoon was due to a malicious desire to display to the public the mutual misgivings with which Liberal statesmen and writers regard one another.

However that may be, I am prepared to disagree with Mr. Gardiner. I have been prepared to disagree with him ever since we agreed to do so about a week ago—at lunch. I had hoped that his observations would act as an anæsthetic, under which mine might have been painlessly extracted. But I find that instead of being a sedative they are an irritant (laughter).

Now I pass to Mr. Gardiner. And in doing so I would like to make one of those sinister revelations which abound in modern public life. There are two Mr. Gardiners, or at any rate his relations with the Muses are of a distinctly bigamous character. There is, and I think it is he who has chosen to come before us this afternoon—there is a blameless Mr. Gardiner, the distinguished author of a biography with an amiable tendency to be a respecter of persons. But there is another Mr. Gardiner, the more agile figure who wrote “Pillars of Society” and “Prophets, Priests and Kings,” and who, at any rate when he came to those persons who disagree with him and me, was not quite such a respecter of persons as his elder brother. And I venture to think that the second Mr. Gardiner will cheer sincerely everything that I have to say about his elder and more respectable relative, to whom we have listened this afternoon.

It was a matter of great pleasure to me to learn that he had spent—he did not say whether it was a pleasant or an unpleasant—Whitsuntide, with “Napoleon III”—very improper reading for a Liberal (laughter). I spent Whitsuntide with “Sir William Harcourt,” imbibing the pure milk of the word from Mr. Gardiner. Now Mr. Gardiner showed the cloven hoof almost at the outside. He was barely out of the stable when he said, almost in his opening remarks, that no man is wise enough to pass judgment on another. I do not think it is the business of a biographer or an historian to pass judgment. His business is to expose facts and tell the truth. When a man talks about the verdict of history, you may be certain that he is making it up as he goes along. Is it not a

ghastly idea that one is there as an embodied posterity to put them all in their places and say which are sheep and which goats ?

Mr. Gardiner was prepared to advocate in his biographer the quality of enthusiasm, and in speaking of this he told us that Froude had repainted Henry VIII. My impression is that he had rubbed him out and done him again (laughter). So far as that quality in the biographer is concerned, you may have seen in the paper recently the will of a distinguished scientist which expressly prohibited the publication of any biography of the deceased gentleman—a futile prohibition because you could not enforce it. I am not prepared to go so far as that ; but I am prepared to go home and write an inhibition of Mr. Gardiner's enthusiasm, which does not minister to the emergence of truth.

There was another point on which he trailed his coat for me—not altogether successfully, because I think I agree with him. He was discussing the extent to which a biographer is entitled to introduce his own personality, and he made—as we must all make—an exception in the case of Boswell. In my humble judgment the Boswell scale of biography is something to be thought of in a category by itself ; and what we are really thinking about is the ordinary working biographer, who does not happen to be a genius, writing about a person who does not happen to be a Johnson. When we come to the ordinary case, I absolutely agree with Mr. Gardiner that it is no business of the biographer to obtrude his own personality. The reader who gets up from a biography—not having skipped it, but read it, as I did with “ Sir William Harcourt ”—except the appendices—should get up knowing no more of

the biographer than that the man has a consuming interest in his subject. It is no business of the man who works the magic-lantern to get between the audience and his picture.

Mr. Gardiner then travelled on to some more doubtful ground. He deliberately incited the great men of to-day to autobiography ; and he referred especially to the sad case of Mr. Winston Churchill. Mr. Winston Churchill seems to me to be perhaps the first and the greatest of the disciples of Mr. Gardiner's principles of biography. He told us—and is it not exactly what Mr. Churchill did ?—that you should believe in your man and do your best for him (laughter). That is exactly where I do not agree. Those are the instructions which I frequently (but not too frequently !) receive in another capacity ; and I do the best I can for them. But I do not conceive that the instructions given to counsel are proper instructions for a biographer. The essential thing both in biography and in history, and I am not diffident in suggesting it before so good a Boswellian as the Chairman—the essential thing in biography is to tell the truth about your man. That is your only job. That is a platitude which leads one, as platitudes frequently do, into rather strange places ; and it seems to me to light up the whole duty of the biographer and his whole relation to his subject. I say nothing of autobiography—that unrivalled vehicle for telling the truth about other people (laughter).

One hears a great deal in these days about the disrespectful tone of modern biography, and of much modern biographical writing. The truth is often a disrespectful thing ; but one has to tell it. One has sometimes heard it said of a book that it

would make the subject of it turn in his grave. Well, I venture to think that there are some people now living who would be well advised to have their graves left with room for turning. However much contemporaries may be fooled, the sole duty of the biographer is to let posterity know the truth. That is why there should be a decent interval (laughter) between the appearance of the figure on the stage and the appearance of his biography, between the giving of the show and the giving of the show away by the biographer. That is why one is almost bound to deplore the rising tide of what Mr. Gardiner has called the official biographies, the dreadful dark-blue or dark-green mass of volumes that is rapidly inundating the book-shelves—books produced by the friend of the family, books produced under the influence of what Macaulay called “that disease of the understanding which may be called the *furor biographicus* and which is to writers of lives what the goitre is to an Alpine shepherd.” That is the frame of mind of the friend of the family. It is a thing to be whole-heartedly deplored for the simple reason that in nine cases out of ten—and of course “Sir William Harcourt” is the tenth case—truth and accuracy have been sacrificed to tact on scores of points ; and all you get in the official biography is the same tale that fooled contemporaries. That is not history ; it is not literature. It is simply monumental masonry. The epitaph can be just as lying as an epigram, and usually at greater length.

But one can say that the biographer’s tone has got to avoid that awful tombstone note which runs like the drone of the bagpipes through so much biographical writing. You have got to get away from the tradition of that Nineteenth Century

biography whose model was not so much Mr. Boswell as Mr. Bowdler. You have got to get away, with certain limitations. There must be a certain deference paid to the dignity of history, which for so many people means a sustained effort to write like Gibbon with a bad cold. You must not describe the permanent in terms of the ephemeral. I once omitted a reference to Mr. Churchill precisely on this account. That does not exclude a certain briskness of style, although, if you tell the truth in this country in less than ten pages, you are accused of making an epigram, a most damaging accusation.

There is a further limitation, not a limitation of style but of attitude. I will try to put it in this way. The biographer should not so write of his subject that he will be unduly shy about meeting him in the next world. One of my most cherished possessions is a set of drawings by Max Beerbohm representing the adventures in the Hereafter of an eminent statesman, whose name shall not be drawn from me—but he is not in this building. It depicts—and I see no reason to disbelieve the eschatology—a frantic series of endeavours to avoid awkward meetings. There is, I have always liked to think there is, a Hereafter for biographers, a Hereafter in which Mr. Gardiner will have to encounter the late Sir William Harcourt, a formidable figure even in the simple uniform of the Heavenly Choir (laughter)—in which I think the Prince Consort will find the conversation of Mr. Strachey a pleasant relief after fifty years in the undiluted company of the late Sir Theodore Martin. There may be a certain asperity in Mr. Swinburne's greeting of Mr. Gosse. That is what every biographer must have in mind.

It is a limitation difficult to describe. The meeting of Mr. Gladstone and John Morley will be a meeting of old friends. We have not all those advantages. The rest of us must strive to do our job by simply telling the truth in the way I have suggested, with that meeting in mind.

Never write a book about a man you despise, because it won't be a good book. It is not the business of a biographer to climb into distinction on the shoulders of a dead man. What you have to try to do is to paint a portrait, not with that reverence which portrait painters feel for rich, but unfortunately cross-eyed, sitters, but with the decent respect which an artist feels for a subject which merits respect. That is the duty of biography. Where biography departs from it, it is a thing to be condemned.

There is another evil—bulk. There is far too much of it. Far too many people are commemorated. The evil is even pervading the English drama. It has even stimulated Mr. Drinkwater to evolve a form of composition half biography and half charade. Even in the case of those who merit such commemoration I suggest they are commemorated at far too great length, for the simple reason that their papers are all included. That is the thing that inflates the work to an enormous size and makes it top-heavy. Take the modern political biography. Do you realize that the life of Disraeli is in six volumes, three times as long as the longest life of Napoleon? There is a tradition now that you must record the orthodox politician in two volumes. There is a careful enumeration of the stages of promotion. Early Promise, three chapters; Oxford Union, one chapter; Enters Politics, two chapters;

and so on ; Won Golden Opinions as Private Secretary ; Under-Secretary, and so on : till the two volumes are full, and we have travelled the whole length of one of those careers that are as inevitable as the Cromwell Road. The inflation of the thing is due to a large extent to the publication of the papers with the memoir. If the papers are worth it, let us have them published separately. Let it be Boswell, or let it be one volume. If you have got Boswell or Johnson, I don't care if it is sixty volumes. If you have not got that, let it be one. You can say almost all you can say about anyone that ever was in one volume.

Tell the truth ; tell it shortly ; and, above all, tell it with a vivid painting-in of the historic background in which the man lived. The weakness of official biography is that it is written with an almost complete suppression of the historical scene. We have got to get back to a still older ideal—to the book which used to be called the “ Life and Times.” We have got to give much more history, much less isolation of the subject of the biography by himself. We have got to get away from this new surgical theory of biography, as an operating table on which you “ open him up,” like the people in the play, the idea that the biographer can isolate a man in a vacuum completely from the conditions of his time. You have got to give a full and vivid presentation of the whole scene with the people moving up and down with the sunlight on him. Don't be ashamed of imagination—most historians have none. The business of writing history is the full and vivid painting of such a picture as that. The business of biographers and historians is to write about dead men. But they should remember

that they were not always dead. That, ladies and gentlemen, is my case.

MR. A. G. GARDINER : I think you will agree with me that, whatever else I failed to do, I certainly started the torrent of Mr. Guedalla's wit, and I think I have provoked him into the delivery of as scintillating and sparkling a speech as this audience has ever listened to (cheers). I have no fierce disagreement with him now, for we have reached a reasonable end of our labours and, moreover, I have been observing to my right symptoms that we may look for a few words from the Chairman (cheers)—and I should hesitate to keep you for a moment from that. I do not think there is really at the bottom of things any serious disagreement between me and Mr. Guedalla. He drew attention to personalities as evidenced in two different types of books of mine, and I might quite reasonably retort on him by asking him to recall the principles of biography he has laid down to-night and then to go home and read "Napoleon III." I think he will be quite astonished at the contrast (laughter). And then I think he would feel that, however much I might be reprimanded, I was not the only person on the platform who was subject to criticism in regard to stating propositions which in practice he rather tended to disown. I think that is all I have to say in reply to Mr. Guedalla.

MR. ASQUITH : Ladies and Gentlemen, my agreeable duty is to ask you to give, as I am sure you will, your very hearty thanks to both the combatants in this sham fight. They have evidently been lunching together, and, so far as I can make out,

and I have followed both addresses not only with interest but with close attention, there is no proposition upon which they are at issue. At any rate, so far as I am concerned, I subscribe to everything that has been said by both of them. I hoped we were going to have a real duel with the buttons off the foils. Still, we have heard a great deal, and I am sure we shall carry away quite a number of the things they have said.

I have never written a biography myself, unlike our two distinguished speakers, nor notwithstanding what Mr. Gardiner has said do I propose to write an autobiography. I will leave that to other members of my family (laughter). Mr. Guedalla pointed out truly that there is a great distinction between a biography and an epitaph. Dr. Johnson said—Boswell has recorded it, and it is one of his truest sayings—“Man is not upon his oath in a lapidary inscription.” When a man is writing a biography he ought to show a certain amount of circumspection and regard for truth. Here comes in a very difficult problem and it is extremely uncertain how it should be solved. What ought a biography to be? A photograph, a picture, a caricature or a creation? Most of the good biographies, if you classify them, are in one or other of these categories. But the best and clearly the best, the only ones which have a title to immortality, are not creations like, for instance, Carlyle’s life of Sterling; certainly not caricatures like—well I won’t say; still less photographs—there is nothing so dull as a photograph; but pictures, the pictures of an artist who has studied and loves his subject, and brings to the delineation of it, not only accuracy of memory, not only truth of presentation, but that imaginative

insight which distinguishes a mere chronicle or record from a living biography of a person. It is for that reason that Boswell stands in the supreme position, which he still holds and from which he will never be displaced among the biographers of the world.

I will venture to put in a momentary demurrer, on my own modest account, to an incidental remark of Mr. Gardiner. I am not sure that I agree with him that he has Johnson on his side in saying that an autobiography is to be preferred to a biography by a third person. Autobiography is, of course, a marvellous chapter in literature. Augustine, Rousseau, Cellini, Cæsar ; and here in England we have the great masterpieces of Gibbon and Benjamin Haydon. These are illustrations of what a very fine standard of literary art autobiography can reach. It is, however, always liable to certain inherent limitations. The writer is self-conscious, more or less gazing in the looking-glass to get a portraiture of his or her own features, and is therefore liable to be egotistic and self-conscious. It is also extremely difficult in autobiography to tell the truth, or, at any rate, the whole truth. Biography ought not to be subject to these temptations. I think we here in England, in our literature, may claim, in biography, to have produced the masterpieces of the world—Boswell's "Life of Johnson," Lockhart's "Life of Scott," and we have a book I put side by side with both of these, certainly in the same class, Sir George Trevelyan's "Life of Macaulay" (hear, hear).

A favourite saying of that great artist, an old friend of mine, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, was that we ought to praise Allah for the diversity of his creatures. To the biographer, that is, of course,

the peculiar wealth of the field which he tills and from which he draws the harvest. But I confess that I agree most strongly with Mr. Guedalla that the multiplication of biographies is one of the growing evils of literature. There are far too many of them, and they are far too long.

Just take the Victorian statesmen. When Mr. Guedalla was speaking I jotted down from memory a list of those whose biographies have been given to the world—Gladstone, in three volumes; Beaconsfield, in six volumes; Lord Granville, in two volumes; the Duke of Devonshire, in two volumes; Lord Clarendon, in two volumes; Lord Salisbury in two, with the promise of at least two more; the Duke of Argyll, in two volumes; the Marquess of Ripon, in two volumes; Sir Charles Dilke, in two volumes; Lord Lytton, in two volumes; and happily we have had a recent accession in the shape of a life of Sir William Harcourt which, I think, does not exceed two (laughter). A further instalment, to which we are all looking forward with the greatest interest, will be Mr. Spender's biography of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in two volumes. I had forgotten Mr. Garvin's "Chamberlain"; if it goes within six or eight volumes, we shall get off very well (laughter).

I do not know whether you have read all these; I have read all that have seen the light, and in all, with different degrees of detail and very different degrees of literary skill, you will find the same story told. I have read, I think, at least twelve accounts of the Home Rule struggle; I have read certainly twelve accounts of General Gordon, Egypt and the Sudan; I have read I do not know how

many accounts of the struggle for the enlargement of the franchise and the other reforms of the Middle Victorian period, and you cannot introduce, no human heart can introduce, much variety in the narrative of the same series of events. If only the writers could have had a clearing-house (laughter). Home Rule, the franchise, Egypt, the Franco-Prussian war, whatever it may be, why not have a great chapter about that, and then devote the rest of the book to what really interests the world, the personality of the man you are endeavouring to depict and perpetuate for the memory of posterity? The output would be immeasurably less, but the instruction of the world would have been improved. I do not know whether there are any intending biographers here. As for Mr. Guedalla, I will venture to say to him that his admirable book on the Second Empire does not err in any way in these particulars. It is short, terse, and I need not say brilliant, and it does not cover ground that has been travelled a hundred times before. But if there are any intending biographers here—the temptation seems to be very great—let me give them a final word of counsel. Get rid in your narrative of all the common material of contemporary history which is not in any way specially connected with or appropriate to the man or woman you are attempting to describe, and concentrate yourself on delineating the figure of the man you are endeavouring to recall to life.

I am sure that advice will not be taken, but still I think it is worth while, at any rate by way of warning and caution, to recommend it to those who intend to pursue the biographical art, and ask them to show a little more economy in the materials,

We are very grateful to Mr. Gardiner and to Mr. Guedalla for what they have told us. I could have wished that they had been a little belligerent between themselves, but we cannot blame them for that. In these days we are anxious for any sign which shows that the pacific spirit is beginning to dominate individuals and mankind, and I am sure you will all agree with me in giving them the most hearty vote of thanks.

MR. C. D. STELLING : Ladies and Gentlemen— one word more. At these lectures we have never selected our chairman on the customary “figure-head” principle. I think there were three main motives which prompted the Committee to ask Mr. Asquith to take the chair to-day. The occasion demanded the presence of a potential victim of the biographer’s art, actual victims being inaccessible. Our second motive was to get on this platform the brilliant leader of the school of what may be termed *décolleté* autobiography. We failed to persuade her to lecture to us, and we hoped that we might lure her here in the wake of her husband. Our hope was fulfilled. Lastly, we anticipated a summing up that would be graceful and suggestive, and pour oil on the troubled waters of controversy. We want to tell Mr. Asquith that emphatically we were not disappointed.

MR. ASQUITH : Thank you.

LECTURE VIII

“ Will the Ape and Tiger ever Die ? ”

THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

MR. OSWALD MOSLEY, M.P.

Chairman : VISCOUNT ULLSWATER, G.C.B.

VISCOUNT ULLSWATER : My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ought, first, to introduce to you the protagonists who are going to deal with the question of which you have been informed. On my right is the Duke of Northumberland, who, as you know, takes great interest in all questions of the day. He is a man of very strong views which he holds very strongly and which he expresses very strongly—and I have no doubt that it is always a comfort to find anybody like that in these flabby days. On my left is Mr. Oswald Mosley—who became a member of the House of Commons while I was still presiding over that body. I think at that time he was the youngest member of the House and he very soon rose to distinction. I remember hearing his maiden speech and remarking to a friend that it was one of the most successful and brilliant I had ever heard in the House, and the promise he then gave is justified. He is a man of independent views. I daresay you know the definition which a government “ whip ” once

gave of an independent member. He said that an independent member was a member who was not to be depended upon (laughter). Well, I think we may depend upon him to-day for stating his case very clearly and in very admirable language.

Now the title of this lecture is "Will the ape and tiger ever die?" Rather a poetical description perhaps of the subject to be debated. I have no doubt you are all very well read in Tennyson, a great deal better read than I am, but there may be some amongst you who do not see what the point of the title of this lecture is. One gentleman to whom I was speaking about it said, "Oh, 'Will the ape and tiger ever die?' I suppose that is something about Clemenceau." Others supposed that the two protagonists who were going to take part in the debate represent those two forms of animal life. In order that we may get the thing upon a proper footing, will you allow me just to remind you of that stanza in "In Memoriam" which concludes with these lines; and that will give you a clearer indication than I can give you of what the subject matter is, and I may use words perhaps which I used many times from the Speaker's Chair when I say that of that poem I have for greater accuracy procured a copy (laughter):

" They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

" In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man ;

- “ Who throve and branch’d from clime to clime,
 The herald of a higher race,
 And of himself in higher place,
 If so he type this work of time,
- “ Within himself, from more to more ;
 Or, crown’d with attributes of woe
 Like glories, move his course, and show
 That life is not as idle ore,
- “ But iron dug from central gloom,
 And heated hot with burning fears,
 And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
 And batter’d with the shocks of doom,
- “ To shape and use. Arise and fly
 The reeling Faun, the sensual feast ;
 Move upward, working out the beast,
 And let the ape and tiger die.”

Now to come from poetry to prose. It is proposed that each of the speakers should have somewhere about twenty-five minutes in which to address you. I will be the timekeeper and warn them when they are getting near the end. I will say not exceeding twenty-five minutes, and then it may probably be convenient and desirable that each of them also should have a brief reply, and after that we will not have a division but we will allow every one of you to form such conclusions as you think best from the materials which have been submitted to you. We will begin, if you please, with the Duke of Northumberland.

THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND : My Lord Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. The other day I was rung up by the gentleman who is arranging

these lectures, and he asked whether I would deliver a lecture. I said, "I don't know. What's the subject?" He said, "Will the ape and the tiger ever die?" I said, "Ask me something easier." It was like one of those riddles which you hear: "Why is a mouse when it spins." He went on to explain what the quotation meant. He said, "It means, 'Can the fighting instincts of man be effectually and permanently curbed?'" That, at any rate is intelligible and perfectly simple, but perhaps it is rather a foolish question. The answer is, "Of course they can be curbed." There is no difficulty about it at all. Most of us when little boys at school had little difficulty in curbing our fighting instincts if it was a question of taking on a boy a great deal bigger than ourselves. Not only is it quite easy for individuals to curb their fighting instincts, but great nations, huge empires with vast populations have quite successfully curbed these instincts. The Chinese, the Hindu peoples of India, the natives of Egypt, have from time immemorial so repressed their fighting tendencies that they have become an easy prey for successive conquerors. The population of the Roman Empire effectually repressed its fighting instincts to such good purpose that it refused to fight at all and left the defence of the Empire to a handful of mercenaries, with the result that the barbarians destroyed the magnificent civilization of Rome, and for six centuries Europe was plunged into the awful anarchy of the Dark Ages.

But let us look nearer home. Nine years ago the British people had so repressed their fighting instincts that they were entirely unprepared for a war which every thinking man should have known

was coming, were quite unable to carry out their Treaty obligations to defend Belgium, and ignored or overwhelmed with reproaches the one great man, Lord Roberts, who warned them of the danger. The result was the Great War, perhaps the greatest disaster which has ever befallen civilization. And although the fighting instincts of the British race revived and were displayed as splendidly as ever in that struggle, yet no sooner was it over than they immediately set about curbing their fighting instincts once more, with the deplorable result that they are now more defenceless than perhaps ever before in their history ; and, instead of honouring the fighting men who foresaw the war and brought them through the war, they prefer to lavish titles upon profiteers and politicians and other wealthy men whose chief claim is that they have subscribed liberally to the Party funds, and instead of erecting statues to Roberts or Kitchener or Haig, they prefer to erect a statue to an American rebel, Washington, whose only claim to fame is that he defeated the British Army. The extent to which we have curbed our fighting instincts is shown by the fact that two years ago our Government handed Ireland over to a band of murderers rather than fight them, and surrendered the Irish Loyalists to whom we were bound by every consideration of honour to their age-long enemies, with the result that that country is rapidly sinking into barbarism.

There is no difficulty at all about the repression of fighting instincts. It is as easy as falling off a log, and as silly. Its results are invariably disastrous and demoralizing, and have been the direct cause of the overthrow of empires, the enslavement of peoples, and the destruction of successive civiliza-

tions. So obvious is this that every sensible nation has, so far from repressing these instincts, tried to develop and train them, realizing that they are one of the blessings of Providence bestowed upon mankind for its protection in an evil world. I say "evil" advisedly, because there is a certain superficial modern type of mind which tries to argue that wars arise merely from misunderstandings and that, therefore, you may avoid war in the future by associations of nations which profess on paper to be animated by angelic intentions towards one another and to mankind; whereas, of course, the main causes of war are the ineradicable cupidity, hatred and revenge and lust for power and domination which are instincts inherent in human nature. The only way, therefore, to prevent the peace of the world being disturbed by them is by armed force. In other words—I really apologize for being so elementary—those nations which desire to preserve the peace of the world must see to it that their united forces are so strong that no other nation will dare to defy them. Our ancestors, not being idiots, saw this very clearly and therefore established a principle called the Balance of Power, which simply meant that if any nation threatened to become too powerful the other nations must combine against it. The nation which has always proved the decisive factor in preserving Europe from any one power is Great Britain, owing to the enormous advantages conferred upon her by her geographical position, the command of the sea, and the resources of her Empire. Unfortunately, the lost opportunities of Great Britain constitute the great tragedy of modern history. Untaught by successive disasters, misled by her politicians, her clergy and the

majority of her leaders, she has steadily refused to shoulder her responsibilities and duties to the world, which would only have entailed a tithe of the sacrifices cheerfully borne by other nations, and has allowed successive great Empires to establish a dominating position in Europe and to destroy the peace of the world. She is to-day failing in her duty in precisely as she has done in the past.

What were the plain lessons of the Great War? One was that national security depends upon the training of the whole nation to arms. Our first act after the Armistice was to repudiate National Service altogether. Another lesson was that our security depends upon an alliance with those nations of Europe whose interests are the same as our own. We have dissolved the greatest and most successful alliance in history, and the result is that we have left France isolated in Europe and that the peace of the world becomes daily less secure. Another lesson was the increasing importance of air power. We are notoriously defenceless in the air. Another lesson was the necessity of co-ordinating policy and strategy. There is no relation whatever between our foreign policy, which consists in undertaking vast commitments all over the world, and our military and naval policy, which is based solely on the desire for economy. It is the old, old story of organized self-deception, which is bound to lead to another disaster before very long. And all this at a time when the world is menaced by the most terrible dangers. One of the greatest empires of the world, Russia, is in the hands of a gang of conspirators, who have established a despotism so devilish that it aims not merely at the overthrow of civilization but at the demoralization

and corruption of humanity. That is only one danger. Then there are the conditions created by the war. The Allies were compelled in self-defence to inflict the most humiliating terms upon Germany and Turkey, though they are not, of course, nearly so humiliating as the terms Germany would have inflicted on us had she won, nor as those which she actually inflicted on Roumania. Indeed, the treaty of Versailles was a failure because it adopted neither of the only two alternatives for securing peace. It left Germany united and yet created no strong combination of Powers to keep her in check. Turkey has already defied us and torn up the Treaty of Sévres. As for Germany, does anybody really believe that she will acquiesce in the terms of the Peace settlement? There is no doubt about her intention to evade the payment of reparations if she can, but that is, compared to other issues, a minor matter. Looking back on Germany's history, her traditions, her national aspirations, and the character of her people, is it conceivable that she will permanently submit to be deprived of Western Poland, Danzig and Upper Silesia, let alone Alsace-Lorraine? Is it likely she will submit, if she can avoid it, to the limitation of her armed force and the loss of her colonial empire? Such are the plain facts of the present European situation. And yet we are wasting time to-day in solemnly discussing whether the ape and the tiger will ever die. What have we done to restrain the ape and the tiger? What have we done to keep the peace of the world?

We might have done almost anything. We were absolutely supreme in the world four years ago; we could have dictated any terms we liked. What did we do? We were parties to the Treaty of

Versailles which redistributed the territories of Europe. No sooner was our signature dry on that paper than we proceeded to wash our hands altogether of that settlement. Not in an open and straightforward way, but in the most dishonest and underhand manner that can be imagined. There were two honest courses open to us, for both of which there is perhaps something to be said. We might have said, "This is our peace, we have signed it, we will see that it is maintained, we will guarantee the integrity of all those nations whose fate we have settled, we will conclude a defensive alliance with them for that purpose and support them by force of arms if they are attacked." That is the course which the French, being a logical and straightforward nation, have adopted. Or we might have said, "It is true that we have signed this peace and that we approve this redistribution of territory, but it must be clearly understood that our responsibility ends there ; the nations to whom these territories are assigned must do the best they can to preserve them, we give them no guarantee for the future. We have fulfilled our promises to them, and we decline to undertake any further obligations." That again would have been perfectly honest, and, had that policy been combined with an alliance limited to the western maritime nations of Europe, I think there would have been something to be said for it. After all, it is asking a good deal of this country to undertake obligations to preserve Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, and so forth.

But we did neither of these two things. What we did was characteristically British. We tried to delude ourselves and to delude the world into the belief that we were prepared to honour our signature

and preserve the Peace of Versailles by signing another document called the Covenant of the League of Nations—a monument of futility and hypocrisy—by Article X of which we and some fifty other nations bound ourselves on paper to preserve one another's territories if attacked. Now the beauty of that Agreement is this. If it means what it says, it is the most militaristic document ever framed. It means that, if two obscure South American Republics go to war, we shall have to interfere to compose the quarrel. It means that we undertake a roving commission to join in settling disputes all over the world, however little they concern us, and we must maintain enormous armaments for the purpose. If, on the other hand, it does not mean what it says, then obviously it provides no guarantee at all. I need not explain to this intelligent audience that it does mean absolutely nothing at all. In the first place there are no naval or military agreements between the signatories to that Covenant, which could alone make it a reality. Secondly, if any one of the fifty signatories declines to intervene, that automatically exempts all the others from intervening. You will observe, therefore, that it secures two great advantages. In the first place it precludes the possibility of united action by those Powers which really do desire to preserve the peace of the world, and it precludes the possibility of collective preparation for war on the part of those Powers.

You will observe also that this document is so ingeniously framed that it defeats all the purposes of the Peace settlement. It gives an appearance of international solidarity while carefully avoiding the reality. If it had really ever been intended to preserve international peace, it would have been

based on international armaments, the signatories would have agreed not only to combine their policies but their armies and navies. Such a proposal was in fact made at the outset by M. Clemenceau, and expressly repudiated by President Wilson as destructive of the theory on which the League was based, and the first thing the League did was to announce its intention not of pooling armaments in the common cause but of disarming everybody all round. The more I have studied the League and its origins, the more firmly have I become convinced that such Machiavellian ingenuity displayed in undermining the peace of the world and in assisting the designs of Germany and Russia could only have been evolved—and there is good reason to believe it was evolved—in those hyphenated American circles who formed the entourage of President Wilson. In this connection it is significant that the machinery devised by the League for preventing war is all based on delay. Before going into war the nations must submit their case to the League, and only after a specified lapse of time are they allowed to undertake hostilities. Even two hundred years ago, when the raising of armies, their concentration and movement, was an extremely lengthy and laborious process, such a provision would have been silly enough. But in these days when the capital of a country, its arsenals and dockyards, may be destroyed, and its capacity to make war paralysed in a single night by an air raid, such a proposal is too childishly idiotic for words. The only explanation is that it is expressly devised to facilitate a sudden, secret and decisive assault upon a peaceable world by an aggressive and warlike Power.

I need not tell you that the British people do not believe in the League. They have far too much common sense for that. But it provides just that plausible mixture of false sentiment, false reasoning, false humanitarianism, and false Christianity, which appeals to certain types of English men and women. It provides a plausible excuse for shirking facts and duties. It appeals to that faculty for self-deception and humbug which is always latent in the British mind.

Now where is all this internationalism with its sophistries and catchwords leading us? Straight to another disaster. The great danger of the future, I do not say in the next few years, but in the not far distant future, is another attempt such as Germany made in 1914 to dominate the world by some powerful aggressive nation. It seems to me that the conditions prevailing in the future will tend to make such an attempt far easier than in the past, and for the following reasons, partly material and partly moral. Firstly, the purely strategic conditions tend to facilitate a sudden overwhelming assault by sea and air through the development of submarines and aircraft, aided by chemical science, which will no doubt evolve gases of a far deadlier nature than in the last war. It is possible, also, that electricity may be used in ways hitherto undreamt of for war purposes. A decisive victory which will decide the fate of the world may thus be gained in a few days by a Power which secures the initiative. Secondly, those moral forces which have ensured the failure of past attempts to dominate the world are becoming weaker day by day. Take national sentiment, for instance. It is being undermined by various forms of internationalism. There

is the internationalism of world revolution directed from Moscow, there is the even more dangerous internationalism of Socialism recently reformulated at Hamburg, which aims at placing the Trades Unions of all countries under a cosmopolitan hierarchy in which the Germans are supreme. Our so-called "moderate" Labour leaders have recently returned from the Fatherland bringing their sheaves with them in the form of an agreement expressly designed to subject British workmen to the control of the German organization. Then there is the equally insidious internationalism of the League of Nations, which seeks to divert men's minds from realities and to make them place their trust in illusions.

The effrontery of these exponents of internationalism may be realized when we reflect that the majority of them are the very men who deceived us before and were directly responsible for plunging us unprepared into war. They seem to think that the fact that they have been proved wrong entitles them to the confidence of their countrymen, and the bloodshed and misery which lie at their door disturbs their self-complacency not a whit.

It is significant that the keenest advocates of international brotherhood are also those who never tire of fomenting discord between classes and raising the spirit of faction in every nation, and the peace-makers of Hamburg openly proclaim that their ideal of brotherhood is based on class hatred and the irreconcilable antagonism of capital and labour. But patriotism is not denounced only from Labour platforms. Conservative statesmen join in the hue and cry. One of the Ministers of the present Government has told us that "we should be willing

to surrender the freedom of the seas and the stations which have kept it in our hands, and to replace the British flag at Gibraltar by a larger emblem," while another distinguished Tory statesman tells us that "a patriot is a potential homicide," and "as we think of national sentiment are we not tempted to say it is not the love of money but the love of country which is the root of all evil. . . . Patriotism has become the last refuge of a scoundrel."

What chance is there of restraining the ape and the tiger when the pulpits and platforms of our country echo such doctrines?

To my mind one of the most startling things about the Great War is its evidence of the decay of national sentiment. At first sight that seems a strange thing to say. But remember that in 1914 Germany made an attempt to realize the dream of Pan-Germanism—the hegemony of Europe—and she found three nations to help her and only four nations, one of them quite insignificant, to oppose the attempt. Of these, Russia later gave up the contest and in effect espoused the German cause. As to the other nations, Italy waited eight months before she intervened and then only because she believed Germany to be virtually defeated. Roumania and Greece intervened for the same reason only after two years. The remainder remained neutral, enriching themselves at our expense, but of these Sweden and Spain were strongly pro-German, and of the rest Norway and Denmark were the only ones who had any real sympathy with the Allies. In other words, the nations of Europe were, with the exception of France, Great Britain, Belgium, and for a time Russia, quite prepared to acquiesce in the domination of Germany. Now the next war

will certainly be far more terrible than the last. What chance is there of Europe displaying more courage and independence in the future than she did in 1914?

Our sentimentalists are always prating about what they call "the moral sense of Europe." I wonder where they see it. I do not deny, of course, that religion has been a factor in the history of Europe. It undoubtedly played a part in former centuries in saving Europe from the domination of Spain and of France. It may have played a part in the last war, but its recognised authorities were not particularly helpful. Rome did not dare to denounce the crimes of Germany, and Canterbury sought to inspire the British people by declaring that it was the will of Heaven that our women and children should be slaughtered by German airmen without retaliation in kind. And, now that it is all over, the Church proclaims that the peace of the world is to be sought, not as of old through her agency, but by a brand-new Tower of Babel which she has helped to erect at Geneva. And, having given her formal blessing to the triumph of outrage and murder in Ireland, she is now turning her attention to the emasculation of the Bible and the Prayer Book. Well, of course, Moses and Joshua, David and Isaiah are rather strong meat for people who repudiate patriotism, despise loyalty and condone murder.

And now what is the conclusion of the whole matter? The world is in a very dangerous state. One formerly great empire is in the hands of enemies of society and is working for the overthrow of law, order, religion and morality throughout the world. Its principal enemy is the British

Empire, because it is the chief bulwark of these things. It has established an advance base in Ireland and it controls to a great extent, through its emissaries and adherents, the policy of one of the great political parties in this country. Another great aggressive and intensely warlike nation, though temporarily defeated and humiliated, also aims at the overthrow of world peace and is similarly working for the disintegration of its opponents in various underhand ways. We should have little cause to fear either of these dangers if they were generally recognized and courageously faced. But the forces of disintegration and disruption are being assisted by those who should be fighting and warning the people against them. Politicians, political economists, clergy, humanitarians, cranks and faddists, all vie with one another in the congenial task of preventing any strong combination of European Powers to preserve the peace of the world, helping to fasten the tyranny of the Labour leader more firmly on the working man, instead of appealing to him to free himself from it ; uniting their voice with the voice of Moscow in telling him that patriotism is a delusion and a snare, that security is to be obtained by disarmament, that surrender to a gang of murderers is an act of Christian forgiveness, that a wretched debating society in Switzerland represents a great Christian ideal, that it is our duty to forgive Germany and not punish her for her crimes, that Lenin and Trotsky are not criminals, but merely misguided enthusiasts, that the judicial murders of priests in Russia are not really religious persecution, because the Bolsheviks have declared it high treason to teach children the Catechism. In short, that black is white, that an

ape is not really an ape, nor a tiger really a tiger, and that they are only dangerous if you have a rifle in your hand, but perfectly harmless if, in the cant of the present day, you invite them "to meet round a table," which is supposed to be the solution of every problem.

I suggest we should all go home from this meeting firmly resolved to combat these rotten notions wherever we may encounter them, in circles however exalted, whether uttered by statesmen, however wise ; bishops, however pious ; professors, however learned ; or Labour leaders, however sanctimonious ; remembering that common sense is the heritage of all men, however humble or unlearned (cheers).

MR. OSWALD MOSLEY, M.P. : Lord Ullswater, Ladies and Gentlemen. The Duke of Northumberland and I are presented to you this afternoon, beneath a large hoarding which plaintively enquires, "Will the ape and tiger ever die?" It is indeed creditable to the tact of the organizers of the gathering that our mutual rôles are not more closely specified, although I have some certainty of my own, after the speech to which we have just listened. And without pressing for any closer definition of our respective functions, I will merely express the hope that the menagerie in question will not perish this afternoon at the hands of an outraged audience. The speech has mitigated that apprehension. It was a powerful and eloquent appeal, and the fact, which the speaker admitted, that he was quite unaware of what the subject was that we were discussing has in no way detracted from the vigour of his performance (laughter). I speak under two disadvantages this evening not shared by the Duke

of Northumberland. In the first place, I am called upon to perform in the august presence of one of the most famous Speakers of the House of Commons, whose kindly but formidable glance encouraged but also strictly controlled my first trembling essay in Parliamentary debate. It is a great relief to me this evening that nobody knows what we are discussing, because I have to indulge in the luxury of being irrelevant in the presence of Lord Ullswater. I never managed to do that on those occasions to which he so kindly referred (laughter). I am under another disadvantage. The organizers of this entertainment are evidently against me and on the side of my opponent. I will tell you why. I have to try to prove that the combative instinct in human nature can be controlled and eventually eliminated. I can imagine no more subtle means of discrediting that theory than by staging a debate between the Duke of Northumberland and myself. After the speech to which we have listened, you will know the difficulties. If there is a brawl, he wins his case and I lose mine.

The Duke, as was his business, has represented himself this afternoon as the stern, hard-headed practical man, and me as the silly dreaming idealist who, not so much from malevolence as by incompetence, am seeking to encompass the destruction of this country. Do not believe it (laughter). I come before you as the realist. I bow before him as the king of idealists. Examine our two records. Take me. I am honest to the point of simplicity. He is the Don Quixote of our public life. How many dreams has he not pursued, how many windmills has he not charged? How often has he been picked up by his breathless Sancho Panza, Mr.

Colvin of the "Morning Post" (loud laughter). He has referred to one of them, the rescue of the distressed maiden—plutocracy—from the ravishing Bolsheviks. He referred to the sad outcome of this to-night, for no sooner is this bewitching damsel rescued than she ill requites the heroism of her patron, for she employs a counterfeit golden key for the purpose of throwing open the doors of his own innermost sanctuary, the House of Lords, to the invasion of her unpleasant relations. So Tadpole and Taper reap the reward of ducal knight-errantry. Even so, there are compensations, because in this process he is provided with fresh fields of battle and new foes. The honours question affords him a rare opportunity to satisfy his combative instincts in a savage encounter with Lord Birkenhead. That is the form of his practical realism, the rescue of these damsels from their distressing position, who, so soon and so sadly, betray their rescuer. He has told us that all these new conceptions, every new idea which has recently been formulated to prevent a repetition of all that experience the world has gone through in the past, are merely an aggravation of the danger, and the only way to preserve—he did not say the peace of the world, but the safety of one or two countries, is the balance of power and the preparation for war. The answer is simple. The nations of the world have always been prepared for war and they have always had war. The very preparations have secured it. At one moment he was saying the onerous terms we have put on Germany would drive her to another war, and in the next breath he was arguing that the terms should have been much more onerous. He actually quoted the position of Napoleon in 1814, when he

had a French garrison in every town in Germany. Yes, he had. The man of the greatest military genius the world has ever seen, and yet within a year or two of his being in that position the Germans had a garrison in Paris. That is not the way to secure the safety of any nation. You do not by oppressing a nation that has been defeated and thereby driving them into a frenzy—secure your own safety. Nobody ever has in the whole of history won the safety of their own country or of the world by any such means. You have a long sad sway of fleeting triumph at one moment and disaster at the next, the French in Berlin at one time, and the Germans in Paris before long. No oppressions ever devised by a conqueror, be he a man of Napoleon's genius or of Mr. Winston Churchill's genius, have ever prevented a recurrence of war or the overthrow of the country that undertook it. He referred to the balance of power for Europe. Two armed systems confronting each other mutually suspicious and hostile, each fearful of what the other set of nations is going to do. That is precisely the way to provoke war. One gets a slight advantage, sees that an opportunity is in its hands for the moment, and then the argument is put forward : " We have now new organizations which give us some advantage. Next year the other people may have it. Strike now, hit them before they us." That is the way that world catastrophe is created. No, we have tried all these things and they have been passed into the limbo of things that have been tried and found wanting.

We present you a new system of the world, an imperfect system, we agree, but still a conception which should be tried because everything else has

failed. The house of civilization is on fire to-day, and the Duke incidentally remarked that if one of the wings is on fire the wise man would merely sit in his hall till the fire has spread all over. The house is on fire. We put up a fire-escape, a new device. The Duke said that nobody had ever been down a fire-escape before, that there was no precedent, that it was only people like Hindus who left the burning house, and he therefore advised you that it is safer to sit still in the middle of that house than to go down the fire-escape. He says you might break your ankle if you went down that way, and he therefore advises you to sit still and burn quietly.

I cannot debate it at any length this afternoon because time does not permit and it is not really the subject of discussion as I understand it. The machinery of the League of Nations I have advocated on many platforms and hope to do so again (cheers).—It is not a perfect machinery. Of course it is not. Mankind is imperfect, but is travelling slowly forward towards a new era. We are in the position described by a great German philosopher—I must be careful, but he is a much maligned philosopher because his works are always most lucidly interpreted by those who have never read them—Nietzsche, who said, “Man is the road between the animal and the super-man.” That is our position. We are not perfect, but we are proceeding towards perfection, and, when we review the great range of human progress and see the triumphs we have achieved, truly there is some hope that we may advance that little way further that lies between us and the solution of these difficulties. A very short time ago the only means of transport open

to our forefathers was a swing from tree to tree through the agency of a prehensile tail. Such is man's irreverence for nature's original design that we have actually substituted aeroplanes for tails.

May we not, therefore, hope one day to substitute a more ingenious even if more complicated mechanism to settle international disputes than that primitive and admittedly elementary instinct that to-day compels the Duke of Northumberland to pursue the phantom figures of the Elders of Zion through the columns of the "Morning Post" ? (laughter). Even in the case of the Duke of Northumberland, I believe that the stern aspect of Mars conceals a more tender interior, for so elusive, illusory and seductive from all processes of reasoning are those victims of his pursuit that they seem to me to resemble not so much the ferocious scenes of a battle-field as the gentle chase of idyllic nymphs through sylvan glades. But I must not be drawn into the discussion of the mechanism of the League and its ultimate development. We have to consider the combative instinct in human nature. Think of the instincts we have succeeded in controlling, of the number of rather pleasurable instincts men have given up. Mankind has given up many primitive instincts because either they were proved to be bad or because some ethical system demanded it. Those despised ethical systems of which we have heard. Men have given up eating too much, making love too much. Just the frail figures of the doctor and the clergyman stand between man and his instincts. In nine cases out of ten they are quite sufficient. In these respects we have made some advance. Why should we not give up the far more unpleasant instinct of fighting? No one

loves fighting, least of all those who have fought. Think how we have eliminated these combative instincts in ordinary affairs. Duelling was the fashion a short time ago, to-day it has completely died out. I really ask you, is not the instinct of fighting far greater in individual affairs than in national affairs? Which annoys you most, when the next-door neighbour insists on playing his gramophone all night, or when you hear some man has thrown a bomb at some other man you have never heard of in a city you have never heard of? When is the combative instinct more intense? It is far more intense in personal than in national affairs.

What makes nations go to war is that very ethical idealism derided by the Duke of Northumberland. It is that that makes men go to war. They think they are fighting the war to end war. It is not the mere combative instinct. How can you keep that up through months of training, through foreign soil, fighting against people you have never seen? You are not fighting because you yourself see men you want to knock on the head, you are fighting for a great ideal—the peace of the world, for your country, because you think your country right. Why should not those great energies be enlisted in world causes? (cheers).

There are other instances where we can see that the combative instincts are diverted into quite harmless channels. Take adolescence. Is anyone ever more combative than a boy? But instead of fighting they play games, and I would like to tender this suggestion, that you should take a leaf from the book of adolescence and play games instead of fighting. I would ask you that, when next Mr. Churchill raises the shining standard of the con-

queror and asks you to follow him along that old well-beaten track to Moscow to extirpate the villains, that before you follow it or, if your enthusiasm does not take you so far, before you ask other people to follow it (laughter)—think of the ways in which combative instincts might be indulged in at much less expense, and, instead of holding a great meeting at the Albert Hall to draw attention to the Bolshevik menace, hold one to draw attention to the continued supremacy of Mlle Lenglen. Instead of searching our boyhood for a budding field-marshal, search our girls for a budding tennis player. There may be some so prejudiced as to feel greater confidence in their champion after exchanging Mr. Churchill for a muscular flapper. There may be some who believe that many a girl in the simple uniform of lawn tennis cuts a more effective figure than Mr. Churchill in the vestments of Napoleon. Our men of genius have fallen on difficult times and the seed has fallen on stony soil. We are living in an age when we are told that the public demands men honest to the point of simplicity. Those fortunate mortals apparently qualify for this attractive rôle by repeating on all possible occasions the original and convincing statement, "I am an honest man." The only other criterion appears to be the proudly claimed absence of a first-class brain. .

But I am being diverted from my friends the tiger and the ape. I have tried to show that the methods of the past have failed, and that in ordinary everyday life the combative instincts are effectually controlled and that there is no reason why they should not be effectively controlled in what is the far easier situation of international life provided you

have the machinery for controlling them. For instance, you have, of course, great sanctions in the hands of the League. The economic sanction was one of the most potent in the recent war. There are constant consultations now going on with very fruitful results for the production of that international force which the Duke complains is lacking. You have already the policemen in Europe which will provide the power to attack that bigger boy whom even the Duke failed to attack in his school days, and you may have, eventually, the same state of affairs in international affairs as we already have in individual affairs.

Wars are only beautiful things in story-books. In reality my opponent shows you, not a peerless knight in glittering armour, he presents to you man as the offspring of primeval passion, unreasoning hatreds, and dark fears, hurried to his doom by an inexorable heredity which forbids him to use the great products of his inspired intelligence for the enjoyment of the present or the glory of posterity ; which forces his feverish, fumbling fingers to grip the mighty weapons of science to no better purpose than his own extermination. This is no hero. This is a nerveless, panic-stricken fugitive, stumbling through a haunted twilight between the birth and death of a human race which neither faith nor reason could save from self-destruction. I invite you to gaze on a different picture. I ask you to see man as the immortal child of time and evolution ; his back turned upon those gloomy, obscure and ferocious beginnings whence he has been guided by the fostering hand of his Divine Creator to the present moment when the mortal agony of our generation has struck from his limbs the shackling

coils of empty phrases and of self-deception, and from his eyes the scales of false habits and beliefs, revealing, in one fierce flash of reality, the past, the present and the future—the path that he has traversed and the destiny that beckons onwards. You see him now, his anguished features turning towards a new and happier order of the world, already illuminated by the reflected radiance of that ultimate beauty and ineffable peace which for many generations yet unborn will baffle, elude and dazzle the imperfect vision of humanity.

THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND : I have listened with the greatest admiration, as I am sure you must also have done, to Mr. Mosley's very eloquent speech, and, although I do not agree with a word of it, that did not detract from my admiration for its manner if not for its substance. He made one mistaken reference when he said I thought war was a good thing. I do not. He and I think war is the greatest disaster. We only differ as to the way it should be avoided. He says " we have tried all these methods." He says we have tried preparation for war, and that war has always been. I do not think he was in Parliament before the war and therefore he is certainly not guilty of that of which a great many other Members of Parliament are guilty. Before the war there were a great many Members of Parliament who thought exactly like him and did their utmost to dissuade this country from preparation for war, and derided everything Lord Roberts tried to do. When he says we were prepared for war in 1914 I cannot agree, and I do not think you do.

But, quite apart from purely military and naval

preparations, what was our diplomacy doing? Do you think, if we had had a pact with France or an understanding with Belgium, that the war would ever have taken place? If these things had been tried honestly and then you had said it had failed, there might have been some excuse for trying something new which nobody has ever tried before, a method which is only for the Millennium. He says I pointed out that Germany has been humiliated and is yet cherishing thoughts of revenge. If he is prepared to say that we should not have humiliated Germany at all and have forgiven her and asked for a small sum of money, but leave her in the same position as in 1914, I should not agree with him, but I should say he was logical. But you cannot do it any more than you can allow a man who had murdered somebody to go about. It would not be safe. You have to shut them up. That is what we have done with Germany, but having done that it is absurd to say you can take the policeman away. He says we ought to try something new. I have no objection to trying something new, no objection to the League of Nations, provided it does not prevent you from taking those precautions to prevent war which all history shows to be necessary. But we are to throw off the precautions, to try some new scheme evolved out of the brains, well, of people who are very impracticable (laughter).

He used the simile of a house on fire. I quite agree. He said I was not trying to put it out. I am. I should say that Mr. Mosley was in a house built of highly inflammable material, but, instead of taking the ordinary precautions and going to Merryweather's and getting some of his inventions, he says, "No, all these things have failed in the

past. Merryweather has proved to be a broken reed. I am going to have no precautions at all, but I am going to build a new house altogether of asbestos or something which will never be able to catch fire." He says we are travelling forward to a new era of things. We must be travelling to a new era, but whether it is forward or backward I do not know. All I am certain of is that the world is in a far more dangerous state than for a hundred years, and that seems to me to be quite the worst time to be choking off all the precautions and pinning your faith to a new idealism (cheers).

MR. OSWALD MOSLEY : In my view, the old house was completely burned down and when trying to build a new one we should try to use a slightly less inflammable material such as asbestos. The last house having been built of very dry wood, the Duke is proceeding to build a new one of very dry wood. He talked about keeping a nation of 70,000,000 people under lock and key permanently, incarcerated for the rest of time. Does anybody really think that possible? I said that was what Napoleon had tried to do. When Napoleon has failed, will even the Duke of Northumberland succeed? Many have tried, but nobody has succeeded. Everybody in this attitude has excited such a fury of resentment that in a very short time the process has been reversed and they have been under lock and key themselves. Is there not some case for trying a new departure? Of course Germany has suffered and should suffer for her act of aggression in provoking the last war, but give her some hope in course of time, if she behaves herself and discharges her obligations, of once again joining the

comity of nations as an emancipated person. After all, when a man goes to prison, after he has served his sentence he is given a chance. You do not pursue them for ever for that is the way to make permanent criminals. You should give them some adequate hope for the future. If you adopt the old methods you will have the old conditions of things. His whole argument was that it is only by superior armed force that a nation can be safe. Well, let us look at that. In the first place, you have got to be stronger than anybody else. Does he really imagine that in the present state of public opinion you are going to be allowed to keep arms sufficient to beat the rest of the world? No nation is endangering its safety by agreeing to reduce armaments in the same proportion as other people. If it maintains armaments not so strong as other nations when there is no arrangement, then it is surrendering its safety. But if we have sixty ships and another nation has fifty, and we each divide by ten, we have surrendered no factor of safety. You cannot be the one unarmed fool in a world of armed men, but you can live in security in a world that has agreed to reduction to that point where only a police force is provided. If you are in the streets where people are armed with revolvers, you are in a dangerous position even if you have a revolver yourself. You are in a far better position if nobody is allowed to have a revolver at all. We want to make the world as safe internationally as the police have made Piccadilly. What we have triumphantly achieved long since in individual affairs, where all these great emotions of cupidity and other irritants to combat are violently existing, what we have achieved in our individual life can be achieved far more

easily, securely and safely, between nations, where the incitement in the present economic interdependence in the world is not nearly so violent as in the cases of individuals (cheers).

VISCOUNT ULLSWATER : I am sure I shall be expressing the views of all of you when I convey to the Noble Pessimist on my right and to the Youthful Optimist on my left our very sincere thanks for the admirable and brilliant speeches we have heard from them this afternoon (cheers). I shall not, I hope, mar the effect of them in any way by attempting to sum up the arguments on one side or the other. They do not need repetition. If they were to be repeated they would be spoilt. I would much rather leave them where they are. Wild horses would not drag from me the conclusion to which I have arrived. Thank goodness, I am in the same position I occupied for many years in the House of Commons, and have to give no vote. The same thing has happened to me to-day as has happened for many years. Whenever I listened to a speech in the House of Commons, I was always convinced the other way (laughter).

We started on a note of poetry. Will you forgive me if I conclude on that note ? Tennyson was very fond of this metaphor of his of the ape and the tiger. In almost the latest poem he wrote, he referred to it again, and it sums up so admirably the whole point of what we have been discussing that I venture to read it to you as a final word. It is called "The Making of Man."

"Where is one that, born of woman, altogether
can escape
From the lower world within him, moods of
tiger or of ape ?

Man as yet is being made, and, ere the crowning
 age of ages,
 Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him
 into shape ?

“ All about him shadow still, but, while the races
 flower and fade,
 Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining
 on the shade,
 Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices
 blend in choric
 Hallelujah to the Maker, ‘ It is finish’d. Man
 is made.’ ”

(cheers).

A cordial vote of thanks to Lord Ullswater for
 his conduct in the Chair was proposed by Lady Hall
 and carried with acclamation.

LECTURE IX

“That Education is the Curse of the Country”

DEBATE BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE OXFORD & CAMBRIDGE UNIONS

Chairman : VISCOUNTESS ASTOR, M.P.

VISCOUNTESS ASTOR, M.P. : Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to be here to-night because I like helping a good cause. The women in the House of Commons are always interested in good causes. I can truly say causes. Good causes have tried Mrs. Wintringham and myself and placed us very high, but I hope they have not entirely found us lacking. I am glad to be here because I want to hear about education. I know very little about it and I am bringing a perfectly unprejudiced and almost uneducated mind to bear on it. This debate may change the whole of modern life as we know it. I was just thinking—suppose we come to the conclusion that education is a curse, we have got to face the fact that the money we spend on education would probably go to make London brighter. That fills me personally with alarm, and I do hope that, if those who are against education win, they will tell us legislators and those interested in child life what we are going to do. We cannot say to the overburdened mothers, “You have got

to keep the children at home and let them grow up how they will." It is a most serious thing. I hope both sides will take the point of view of a mother of a large family. I as a mother have got to bring that point of view in. I am anxious that my children should do better than I have done. Therefore I want to say a word. I am waiting to hear what effect education has had on the present generation. I belong to a generation where it was not considered necessary for a young lady to be educated. It was considered almost a handicap in life. I have certainly found it a handicap to be semi-educated. As I look round on your educated faces I think it is a bold man who will argue against it (cheers).

MR. R. H. BERNAYS (Worcester College, Oxford) said : Lady Astor, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am a bold man. I had no idea how bold I was until I sat and looked at you, but, before I leave the calm haven of my opening remarks and embark upon the stormy sea of controversy, I have a very pleasant duty to perform. This debate to-night is graced by the presence of Lady Astor (cheers)—and I think I am but representing the feelings of everyone here when I extend to her, on your behalf, our cordial thanks for that she has found time, among her very multifarious activities, to be present here to honour us to-night. We all know something of Lady Astor. We know how she has so nobly maintained the tradition of her sex by having the last word even with Labour members (laughter). We are glad—or at least I am glad—that according to the *Westminster Gazette*, which, being a Liberal organ, could never sound a false note—we are glad, at least I am glad, to meet one who, in another place

has mauled no less a man than Sir Frederick Banbury (laughter). That is a great achievement. But still more are we glad to meet one who was the first to give to an English constituency the honour of being represented by a woman. We are glad, too that she has given such a blow to *the Trade*, a blow all the more ignominious because it comes from a member of a Party which, rightly or wrongly, has always been considered its most trusted representative.

But I understand, according to the *Morning Post*, which I sometimes read, the last infirmity of middle age, that there is a motion to be discussed here to-night, a motion which apparently, according to the *Morning Post*, is, "That Education is the Curse of the Country." When I first faced this subject I said to myself, "Define your terms," and so I went to the Oxford Concise Dictionary and there I discovered that education was systematic instruction. I say "discovered," because it was a considerable surprise to me. It is on these lines that I propose to weigh it in the balance and find it wanting. I propose to discuss it from the point of view of the elementary schools, from the point of view of the public schools, and from the point of view of the Universities, and, if there is anybody left at the end not overcome by the hot air, I should propose to say something about the effects that are so obvious in the world outside. Now take the position of the elementary schools. It seems to me that the elementary schools suffer from two glaring defects. The first is that the classes are too large (hear, hear). Side by side with the really clever boys—in a class of sixty it must be so—sit the dolts and the dullards. Those who after repeated

readings of the Book of Kings have a sort of idea that Ahab was killed by a man who drew a bow at a vulture. After repeated readings of history, when they come upon the name of William they have a hazy vision of a composite personality who conquers, has red hair, is silent, and has something to do with an orange. I consider that such a system baffles the teacher and depresses the pupil. That is not systematic. The next glaring effect is that the curriculum is too wide. I had a very striking illustration of that some time ago, when I was at school—more years ago now than I care to remember (loud laughter). I was privileged to pay a visit to an elementary school. It was an extraordinary sight that I found. The master had opened before him a copy of *Comic Cuts* from which he was reading extracts and asking each boy individually where the joke lay (laughter). He said that he had been instructed by the Board of Education to teach the boys a sense of humour. Heavens ! Empires are tottering, the whole social fabric of the State is in peril, it is essential for the future that we should have educated people to exercise the vote, and we are teaching in the national schools humour from vulgar periodicals and wisdom from the “Funny Wonder.”

But the system is not very much better among the upper classes, or what we now call the so-called upper classes. The Public Schools are rather like the Rothermere Press : they are a favourite target for criticism. But, like the Rothermere Press, we are only too anxious, we are tumbling over one another desiring to taste of their wares. I base my attack on the Public Schools from one very simple standpoint, and that is that they teach and set up a

wrong standard of values. Will my hon. friends deny that when they were at Public Schools it seemed to them that the fate of a House match really was more important than the destiny of a nation, that they were far more frequently urged by their House masters to make runs for the honour of the House than to win scholarships for the honour of the School; that what systematic instruction was given was given to defeat the leg-break rather than elucidate the Latin verse, and you see the results at the University (laughter). Now, of course, there are people, men like my hon. friends who are going to succeed me, who are really clever, to whom a University career is but a brilliant setting to a delightful life of endowed idleness in the Civil Service or at the Bar. But to the majority of us, fools that we are, University education has very little to offer. We pass, after a most expensive training at the Public School, we pass with difficulty, probably at the hands of a very expensive crammer, the very limited test that is demanded of us at the entrance examination, and then——? Well, you can see us any morning in the height of a café-crawl from eleven to twelve, café-crawling with wastrels and coquetting with waitresses (laughter). After three years or so we take our degrees, and what sort of a degree is it? A diploma in forestry at Oxford or an ægrotat in agriculture at Cambridge, and then we go down comforted with the knowledge that there is always an opening for us at Little Pedlington Preparatory School for Boys, where, having failed at everything else, we can teach to generations yet unborn the secrets of success. I contend that, as long as we have a pass school at the University, half the teaching staff at the University, half the money which the State subscribes for the

benefit of education, is wasted in the spoon-feeding of us intellectual cripples.

But I have a much more serious count against our educational system, and one in which I am sure that I shall have the support even of Lady Astor. The educational system is on a class basis. It is the medium of class prejudice, the recruiting house of class hatred. As long as our Universities are anything but universal, and our Public Schools are anything but public, as long as we refuse to bridge or even to allow any attempt to bridge that almost insuperable educational gulf between the classes, then I contend that our educational system instead of being a blessing is a downright curse.

Having made two-thirds of my own speech, I am now going to make the speech of my hon. friend who will succeed me. He will say that you have just listened to an interesting speech, and he will say interesting because you always have to pay a compliment, and interesting is the least complimentary epithet you can use (laughter). He will then say it was entirely and absolutely irrelevant. He will then proceed to give his definition of education, *educō*,* you know, false quantity and all complete. He will then proceed very eloquently to deliver a panegyric on education, and having thoroughly impressed you he will turn to me and say, "Is that the system you were coming here to-night to say is a curse to the country?" Of course, I am not. I am not attacking education as such. I am attacking education as at present constituted. I am attacking not the ideal but the system, and after all, look at the results of this education that we are going to hear so much of.

* Pronounced "eddeewco."

Take the Press. Forty years ago, I am told, newspapers were written for the edification and instruction of parents, and not for the amusement of children. I really do think that we are going to come to a time when the leading article of the *Times* will be written by Uncle Dick, and when the daily denunciation in the *Morning Post* will be signed "Aunt Polly." Forty years ago or fifty years ago a man read a particular brand of newspaper because it gave a particular brand of public policy of which he was in favour, but nowadays he buys it because of its attractive prizes in a sweet pea competition or its insurance against housemaid's knee.

Or again, take the Cinema. If Education were all that my hon. friends are going to say that it is, we should find the Cinema of the greatest value possible to education and hailed as the greatest medium for showing to all classes the glories of our literature and the gems of our art. What do we find? Simply that the Cinema has been used to pander to an unhealthy taste in the public for Chaplin, crime, and cowboy films. My hon. friends will say that education has ennobled life. I tell you that it has vulgarized it more than anything else. Wherever you look, whether it is to literature, and see the circulation increasing by leaps and bounds of the *Red Magazine*, or to the stage, and see the educated classes laughing their fat sides thin over the delicate improprieties of "Stop Flirting," or to the barbaric "Shimmy Shake," or whatever negro vulgarity happens to be the craze at the moment—can you say that education is not a curse? You are asked to support a system which has produced such cheap vulgarity. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*. My hon. friend is from Cambridge,

so I need not translate it (laughter). If you vote on the other side of the House you are voting for the continuance of this system that I have sketched. Remember, it is not because I am against education, it is because I think that our national life is vitiated by the glaring defects of what should be the greatest institution for the world's happiness. It is not because education does so little, but because it might do so much more that I have come here to-night to ask you to vote for this motion (cheers).

LADY ASTOR : Put that way, it does look as if education was the curse of the country. He almost persuades me to be a heathen. I hope the next speaker will have something to say the other way, because I am all upset.

MR. C. H. E. SMYTH (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) : Lady Astor, Ladies and Gentlemen, Besides the pleasure of speaking to a meeting of which you are Chairman, it is a very great pleasure indeed to meet Oxford in a debate of this sort. It is a thing that has almost inspired me with awe and hope from my earliest days, when first I read the almost immortal words of Baedeker, "Oxford and Cambridge both repay inspection. If time presses, Cambridge may be omitted" (laughter). But I am sorry to meet them on this issue, for I feel that I am under a double disadvantage. In the first place I was anticipated last week by an address on the same subject by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and yesterday by the President of the Board of Education. They have taken the words out of my mouth, and, though perhaps they lost a little felicity of expression and clarity of thought, I feel I cannot go over the ground they have covered

(laughter). Secondly, an even greater disadvantage is mine. I must take you into my confidence and tell you that I am not a very well-educated person. I have been to a good Public School and therefore my hon. friend would say I had had no practical experience of education. I had therefore to turn where I could to find a theoretical presentation. I consulted among other things the *Times* reports of School Speech Days, and they all appeared to explain to the child that education was a drawing-out. I got no help there and I was driven back, as one usually is, to Dr. Johnson, who, you remember, begins by answering Boswell's question,

"If, Sir, you were shut up in a castle and a new-born child with you, what would you do?"

"JOHNSON : Why, Sir, I should not much like my company.

"BOSWELL : But would you take the trouble of rearing it? (He seemed, as may be supposed, unwilling to pursue the subject, but upon my question, replied :)

"'Why yes, Sir, I would, but I must have all conveniences. If I had no garden, I would make a shed on the roof and take it there for fresh air. I should feed it and wash it much with warm water to please it, not with cold water to give it pain.'

"BOSWELL : But, Sir, does not heat relax?"

"JOHNSON : Sir, you are not to imagine the water is to be hot. I would not coddle the child. No, Sir, the hardy method of treating children does no good. I'll take you five children from London who shall cuff five Highland children. Sir, a man bred in London will run or wrestle as well as a

man brought up in the hardest manner in the country."

Dr. Johnson on education is a comprehensive figure. He represents almost everyone who has ideas on education in our own day, including the retired Anglo-Indian colonel, who says we beat the world because we take a licking well. Dr. Johnson's phrase was that "There is now less flogging in our great Public Schools than formerly, but then less is learned there, so what the boys gain at one end they lose at the other."

But it is in his observations on education that he is most sound and valuable. It is these I wish to quote. The old battle between the classics and the utilitarians is still going on. The Vice-Chancellor of my own University said, a few days ago, that he disliked the idea of boys messing about in the laboratories, and the modern commercial man refuses to let his boys mess about with Latin and Greek. Dr. Johnson says, "There is no matter what you teach them first. It matters no more than which leg you put first into your breeches. Sir, you may stand disputing which you shall put in first, but in the meantime your legs are bare. No matter which you put in first so that you put them both in, and then you have your breeches on. Sir, while you think which of two things to teach a child first, another boy in the common course has learned both." And again: "I hate by-roads in education. Education is as well known and has long been as well known as ever it can be. Endeavouring to make children prematurely wise is useless labour. Suppose they have more knowledge at five or six years old than other children. What use can be made of it? It will be lost before it is

wanted. Too much is expected from precocity and too little performed."

I must beg your pardon for quoting from Dr. Johnson at this length, but it is valuable to consider his teaching because of its very general scope, and education must be general in scope and method. Education is much more than mere teaching ; that is really the defence of Public Schools. They do give something of a general education not merely in knowledge but also in manners. A Public School does produce gentlemen. As Chesterton says, a Public School always turns out gentlemen, even when it expels them. But the most valuable lessons of the Public School can be simply described. The most important is that it teaches one the art of being vulgar without being offensive, and the art of being offensive with being vulgar (laughter). It also gives you that instinct that carries you over so many difficult problems. Public School education helps one over all sorts of difficulties, and a Public School boy is extraordinarily delightful before he has been corrupted by the subject of his education. The schoolmaster who said, "The more I see of the average parent, the more I respect the average boy," was by no means an isolated case. Neither was the noble lord who watched a cricket match at Eton and turned and said, "To think of all these fine, manly, serious boys being turned in a few years into frivolous Members of Parliament !" A Public School education has been condemned by Mr. A. C. Benson, who said that it fits one to retire at sixty with an inadequate pension, with an impossible wife and children. If it does that, it must be extraordinarily valuable. If it merely fitted one to live on a good income with a charming

wife and a large and attractive family, it would be worthless.

It has been necessary to defend the Public Schools at this length because of the attacks that have been made upon them. Boys who have had fairly conspicuous careers at school, and members of the staff whose careers have not been, perhaps, quite so conspicuous, have taken with avidity to the practice of mud-slinging, and that should be stopped as quickly as possible. That much can be said against Public Schools.

As for Elementary Schools, not having had the experience of my hon. friend, I feel incapable of dealing with them. But if they are only a half-way house to knowledge, any degree of knowledge is a degree of emancipation, and that is the value of education—emancipation. Perhaps you have not quite got the meaning I wish to put on these words. It is the case that fewer marriages are taking place and that more people are remaining celibate. That is really the most important emancipation of all. All the other tyrannies are going. Only woman remains unconquerable. I believe strongly in birth control. In fact, if I had my way I would recommend the painless extermination of the entire female sex (laughter). The proper study of mankind is man (laughter). In Dr. Jenkinson's sermon in *The New Republic*, in which he is talking about science and religion, he says, "For is it not, let me ask you, to take for instance, a man's sublime faculty of reasoning and logical comprehension, far more wonderful that a reasoning man should have the same parents as a woman than that they both should have the same parents as a monkey?" (laughter).

It is the most hopeful sign in education that it does decrease the number of marriages, and for that reason I defend it. I look forward to a day when, under the beneficent influence of education, marriage will be a thing of the past, celibacy will be compulsory for both sexes, and the problem of birth control will, under the benign influence of education, have been finally and permanently solved (laughter and cheers).

LADY ASTOR said : I think it would be better if I said nothing about these acid remarks. The only thing I will say is that I must deplore that one so young should be so bitter (laughter).

MR. J. W. G. SPARROW (Trinity Hall, Cambridge): Lady Astor, Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me the most intense satisfaction to be able to speak for the motion. I rejoice when I find myself on the side of progress and reform, and I would have been in difficulty indeed if I had had to take up the other side, which appears to me to be the blatantly reactionary point of view that what to-day masquerades under the name of education is a blessing and not a curse. I listened with lively interest to the spicy collection of quotations, the conglomeration of irrelevancies, that went to make up the speech of my friend, the hon. opposer. Two points in particular struck me in what he said.

In the first place he seemed to think that education was of universal application, and yet we all know perfectly well that a clever man educates himself, and that the Devil himself cannot educate a stupid man. Therefore the conclusion is forced upon us that the only class of persons who derive any benefit from education are the mediocre.

Then he said that education in everyday life was a sort of blessing. I have not found it so and two incidents occur to me which point very much the other way. About eighteen months ago there was a President of the Union at Cambridge, and he was given, I might almost say educated, to eloquence and flowing passages. In his youth he was precocious owing to the most intensive education, and one day a dramatic incident occurred. He stole some cake and his mother was about to administer, I think very wisely, corporal punishment, but she did not do so because the infant lips uttered the following remonstrance : " Mother, to castigate me and also to confiscate the cake would be a violation of those fundamental principles of justice which we all hold dear." How much more becoming it would have been if the child had said, quite simply, " Mother, don't smack me," or whatever children do say, Mr. Chairman, under those circumstances. Perhaps you may think that truth and that story are not on very intimate terms, and you will forgive me if I fortify it with a personal experience. About nine months ago I was supposed to be helping a candidate in a West of England constituency. We had a meeting at eight and I dined with him at seven. His wife was a profoundly educated woman and she tried to inculcate education into her household. Seven o'clock came. No dinner. 7.30, no dinner, and there seemed no chance of a meal ; then the good lady retired to find out whether there was any possibility of getting something to eat, and in about ten minutes, twenty minutes before the meeting, she came back positively radiant, and we all thought we were going to get something to eat. " Isn't it splendid ! " said she, " Cook is reading Richard III "

(laughter). I only quote these trifles to show you that education in everyday life has its drawbacks.

The motion says that education is the curse of the country. My first observation on that is that everything in England to-day goes by opposites. If you see an advertisement saying that a flat is light and cheerful, you may be perfectly certain that it is dark and dismal. If you hear an entertainment spoken of as seething with surprises, you may bet your boots that it will be a resurrection of the dramas of your youth ; and when this motion talks about something as education, you may be perfectly certain that whatever else it is, it is not that. How do we define education ? It has been excellently defined, and I have heard it defined otherwise, "The painful process of extracting from an innocent and healthy person those qualities which in a healthy state of life are dormant." I prefer to define it as a process of fitting a man for life. Does our present system do that ? Take rural education. Is it not the very replica of that given in towns ? What good does an agricultural labourer get out of an education like that ? Take the Public Schools. They are hotbeds of illiteracy in which people are taught Latin and Greek before they have the remotest acquaintance with English. Agriculture has been the backbone of this country for a thousand years, and to-day the most advanced and progressive of the Public Schools are just thinking about opening out an agricultural course.

Then take the Universities. I do not want to criticise my own University, so let us take Oxford. I believe it to be a fact, though I speak with temerity and am open to correction, that at Oxford, out of all the heads of colleges there is not one single scientist

in the year 1923. We at Cambridge are not like that. But may I take the Cambridge Law Schools. I hope some day to make a living by my tongue directed by my head in the capacity of an English barrister. What have I been learning for two years? In my spare time I have been studying Roman law, International Constitutional law, anything but English law. And that is called education! Don't you think it would be much better if a practising barrister came down to us and said, "This is a case of manslaughter. I give you ten minutes. Here are the facts. You get up and prosecute," or "you get up and defend." That would be of some use to us. It is the sort of thing I and all embryo lawyers will have to do. I have tried to show you to-day that education is misdirected. Of all the curses, the greatest is a misdirected blessing. It might have been so much, and is so little.

We bring forward a definite charge, and that must be answered. I ask you to keep an eye on the gentleman from Magdalen who is to follow me, and also later on the President of the Cambridge Union, and see whether they come out into the open and answer our charge or avoid the issue by running down sheltered avenues of verbosity. Education is a dangerous curse. We have taught a great democracy to read; we have never taught them to think. We have given them the power to understand and have denied them the gift to weigh and value what they read, and that is a very dangerous thing. Secondly, we have unfitted them, in the vast majority of cases, for the lives they have to lead, and that seems to me to be a suicidal thing, and so I think we are entitled to ask for your

verdict for the sake of the pupil, and we invite you to say that what now goes under the guise of education is a sham and a farce, utterly inadequate and unworthy of the England of to-day (cheers).

LADY ASTOR : I am thoroughly mystified by these young men. I do not know how much they believe what they are saying. It is a most interesting evening.

MR. GERALD GARDINER (Magdalen College, Oxford) ; Lady Astor, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased to be able to answer at once your question as to how much we believe. I know how much the learned gentlemen on the opposite side believe. One of them said before dinner, "What a very extraordinary motion this is. How obviously right you are, and how obviously wrong we are. How difficult for you to speak, for all the time you will be saying platitudes." He had heard me speak before (laughter). They have challenged me not to wander off into fresh quotations, not to indulge in more epigrams, but to come to the point. Very possibly I think for the first time to-night (laughter). Now, ladies and gentlemen, you will be interested and perhaps surprised that what we are here to discuss is, "That education is the curse of the country." I very naturally, like my other hon. friend from Oxford, looked at the Oxford Dictionary. Dictionaries give all sorts of meanings, but right at the bottom, the last one, as a sort of last hope for anybody that could not understand the others, was this : "Systematic instruction." Now perhaps we might consider what education is, and it appears to be fairly simple according, not only to the Oxford Dictionary, but others. Education is

the instruction of the young to fit them for life. Education includes many strange and diverse things because odd people have thought very strange things necessary to fit the young for life. Some of us have had the misfortune to translate Latin into English, or English into Latin. Nor is building up the character education, nor is playing games education. The motion says, "Education is the curse of the country." It is interesting to know that there is a curse. The country is obviously in a very unhappy position. I have heard unemployment called a curse of the country, over-population called the curse of the country. I have heard Mr. Lloyd George called the curse of the country. I have heard housing, poverty, and so on, called the curse of the country, and it has also been said that the reparations problem is the curse of the country. These learned gentlemen wave away all these problems with a lordly gesture and say, "We have discovered what is the curse—education." So education, which seems fairly harmless at first, is what is at the bottom of all the troubles of England to-day. I wait very eagerly for what is their main objection and where exactly they connect education with the present evils of the country. They are in the position of learned counsel asking you as a jury to convict a person. We are in the dock. It is for us to prove that it is not the curse, and it is for them to prove that it is. What are their proofs? The classes are too large. I do not know that we can very directly attribute any direct evil of the present time to the fact that classes are too large. Secondly, we are told that the Government are trying to make the people have a sense of humour. That is apparently another curse

of the country. I do not notice it. Then the Public Schools seem to have come in for a great deal of trouble. Of course, the proportion of people educated in Public Schools is practically infinitesimal. They have been adequately defended so I won't go into them any more. Then we come to a wordy string of things. All the evils of the country are dragged in : the Press, literature, the *Red Magazine* (of whose existence I was delighted to learn), films, the cinema, Chaplin, the cowboy films, which are exactly the films I like best. I can very rarely find one. I usually find five-reel dramas which always turn out all right (laughter).

The difficulty is not to wander from the point. The difficulty is to find any one single point where they can connect the curse of the country with education. The last speaker, after enumerating several of those same defects, said he was going to ask you to say that the chief trouble of the country was education. Evidently he dare not say it himself. He just brings out a few debatable points as to whether classes are too large or small, and asks you to say that education is the curse of the country. That learned gentleman who said it was going to be very difficult to know what to say without uttering platitudes was right. Has any such connection between education and the curse of the country ever been brought out? There is one sometimes brought out. I know our President from Oxford will not bring up any serious objection to education. The objection sometimes brought up, and I think he will mention it because he asked me to remind him of something, is this : That in the Victorian days the lower classes were happy and contented, and now that we have education look

what unrest there is. That is a fallacy sometimes nobly exploited in Tory households. The lower classes never were happy. It was simply that they had no means of showing their unhappiness. The second is, that there is no more discontent to-day than was witnessed in the time after the Napoleonic wars. Whether this country is educated is not the problem which concerns us to-night except that there must be a certain amount of it for it to be the curse of the country. I sometimes think there is very much less than we imagine. I was down in Dorset the other day and I had a very fierce argument as to whether King Edward or King George was on the throne, and we held out very violently for King George, but we were defeated because our landlord had a photograph of the King under which was printed, "H.R.H. The Prince of Wales" (laughter). They think the earth is flat. They agreed they had been told it was like an orange, but in what way it is like an orange they do not know at all. This landlord and his wife had a son killed in the war. He was in Kitchener's Army and until we told her the contrary she had always thought he was drowned because she knew Kitchener was drowned and thought he took his army with him. If education is simply getting ready for life, it is utter nonsense to talk about education being the curse of the country. You remember that in the story of the Creation we are told that the Lord God said that because man had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge he had "become one of us." And it is this knowledge, this education, which we are asked to condemn as the curse of the country. I think it is ludicrous and I think you will all agree that we shall not get a really happy country until

we know, not only considerably more than we do at the moment, but until we all know more than anyone of us does at the moment (cheers).

LADY ASTOR : It gets harder and harder, but really the big guns are just about to fire.

MR. J. D. WOODRUFF (New College, Oxford, Ex-President of the Oxford Union) : Lady Astor, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is extraordinarily tactful of you to say big guns and not heavy guns. On this particular subject there is a great deal of a rather heavy and highly technical nature which has to be unfolded. In my turn I should like to pay you a compliment and to say that I also appreciate your presence here this evening, the way you have come down to hold the scales evenly between us and hold them so tightly. That is another example of that fair-mindedness which makes you respected wherever you go, just as though you had learned jujitsu. Really I was not invited to make all the six speeches on the paper and I might set out the *pros* and *cons* in this matter in a way that would convince, but I have to deal with my hon. friend from Magdalen, Oxford. Though he is rather too much addicted to talking about the Devil, he is a very good fellow. I would much rather invite him to a homely tea than all the rest of the University to a champagne lunch. Still I must now deal with him according to the latest methods of political controversy. I shall proceed to ask him a number of embarrassing questions. If he attempts to reply I shall say that I at any rate did not interrupt. He should go to China where they hold that book-learning and competitive examinations are the only test which marks off man from the brute creation. There you meet men of

seventy who are proud to go in for examinations which for fifty years they have consistently failed to pass (laughter). Perhaps like other speakers on this side, I have an inevitable feeling that appearing here to-night may get me the embarrassing support of the Harmsworth Press. The next thing to get to know is how to speak and get support for this motion without lending any support to the base and wicked thoughts which it expresses on education as on all other subjects. However, I shall have to run the grave risk of finding Mr. Lovat Fraser saying, "At last Oxford is waking up," or something like that next Sunday.

The history of learned men may be read. They were always going out because they were good company. They were entertained at Court and people used to dabble in learning. Schools were set up but we all know how incredibly bad the curricula were. But they were the only things on the spot. Men were interested in reading the classics and history. When you had new industrial conditions and reared a new kind of population, you passed the famous Act of 1870. But classics have always been accepted as a standard and they are still taught by force of habit. That is the heavy and sad truth about this matter. Again, take the subject of history. There is nothing magical about the study of history except that it has been made into a fetish. It flatters people to feel that they are calling Bonaparte by his Christian name. But it is a very thin sort of satisfaction, and it does not last. The whole essence of English history can be learned very quickly and simply. It is important that people should realize why this country is a democracy, but they can learn that in

ten or twenty seconds ("Question!"). If the interrupter will listen to me I will explain it to him and I will give him a broad basis for his political philosophy for the future. King Alfred the Great failed in the rôle of deputy food controller, and Canute failed to control the seas. Therefore kings ceased to be trusted. Their power was taken away and, when kings could no longer do anything, the doctrine soon emerged that the King can do no wrong. As the wages of sin is death, therefore the King can never die. Queen Anne, on the other hand, is dead. The whole point of one of my opponents was that there were a great many curses in the country and we had not shown that education was more a curse than anything else. Our contention is that Lloyd George is only possible because you have produced a state of worry and muddle in people's heads whereby they cannot be bothered to try and follow through political questions or any other question. People come forward and say about education, "Education is in the national interest ; A.B.C. equals L.S.D." and so forth. If you consider the sort of problem a modern man has to deal with and the number of experts he meets who disagree, you can hardly wonder if sometimes he shirks them. To say to a man, "We have armed you, we have equipped you with your years at school, now go out and make the best of things in this welter of bewilderment," is of little use. What does he do? He just ignores it. He leaves politics with the comfortable feeling that the British Empire is insured with the *Daily Mail* (laughter).

The argument that you are helped nationally is sometimes used, and it was said that, though it is not true that the citizens are any better, the truth

remains that people do not make use of such schooling as they get through long and weary hours, and I want to get everybody to agree that the sacrifice in happiness is much greater than the gain in increased efficiency or desire to deal with problems or with large questions whenever they may arise. The hours of unutterable boredom and waste time I spent, and that everybody must spend who is going to sit in a large hall and learn cunning tricks and take proper measures of—well we will leave it at that. It might be some defence of education that, though it really did not make men happier, it made them better and fuller beings. Then look at what they call education, the three R's. The house will eagerly applaud the sentiment that just learning to read is not much good. As far as writing goes, it seems to me that on the whole men who have not known how to write are the men who have "made their mark" in the world. . . . The point of my few remarks is that one trouser leg is not worth half a pair of trousers. After fifty years you are disappointed with your efforts and you say you want Continuation Schools. In 1950 there will be a Bill to make the continuation schools go a bit further on. It will have the support of even Lady Astor and other people who are not averse from passing laws telling people how to behave. I feel strongly, Sir, about this attack on the national industry of beer drinking, which I believe to be the chief basis of our commercial supremacy which has come through a system of book-keeping by double entry. This is how I will conclude. We have got a far bigger problem before us than we have any idea of. By spending money on education while you are not tackling the larger problems of poverty

and the way of life, which on the whole would make education worth having, you are following a lazy line of conduct. If these halting words of mine should change the face of education in England, I do not pretend I should not be exceedingly pleased. I hope you will not be led away by the eloquence of the other side, which really results from smug satisfaction with superficial remedies.

LADY ASTOR said : You know now how politicians are made. I very much regret that I never went to Oxford. Of course, I could not have gone to Cambridge. But I wish I had gone to one or the other, because I feel I could have put any point so completely whether I believed in it or not.

MR. R. H. LAWSON SLATER (Jesus College and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, President of the Cambridge Union Society) : Lady Astor, Ladies and Gentlemen, we all suffer from obsessions of some sort or other. We all have the obsession, for instance, that our grandparents were of different species from ourselves. Then there is that other obsession that we are in a degenerate age but not of it, and, finally, we have the obsession that the country is under a curse. I am here simply because I refuse to believe that the country is under a curse.

When you think of the "curses" which have been selected from time to time, you find out how ridiculous they are. Take the United States : the curse there apparently is water, too much water ! Take æsthetic circles, "Brighter London" circles : the curse there is not enough dancing round the may-pole ! But take Puritan England and the curse is that there is too much dancing round the may-pole ! The most popular "curses" to-day

are small-pox, mixed bathing, newspapers and education.

Why this particular obsession about education? It is absolutely absurd to talk about it as the curse of the country. You might as well talk about *living* being a curse of the country, or eating, or drinking, or breathing. Education is not something added, it is not something that you can get away from, not something extra. You have got to have it whether you want it or not. Education is every man discovering himself. I submit that that is a far better definition than that about a system of instruction. Education may really be summed up in one word—"living." That is a platitude, but it is time we got back to platitudes. Partly because I am unable and partly because I am too truthful, I am not going to attempt anything but platitudes. Now consider the "old" ideas about education. Everybody was to be produced according to a delightful pattern. You treated children as so many sacks, opened the mouths of the sacks, brought various boxes along containing a certain amount of historical sawdust and a certain amount of classical lore, and you pushed it all into the sacks one by one and stood in front of the sacks and said, "'Shun!" If they refused to "'Shun," your education was a failure. But to-day we believe that human beings are not sacks. It is a platitude but we forget it. Not animals or gods, but human beings. That is the new educational idea. Why is it the curse of the country? Well, sacks get on very well together. So do ninepins, and chessmen, but human beings if they know how to live, if they have been educated, if they have discovered themselves, do not get on well together without an

effort. In this country, now that a greater proportion of the people are discovering how to live, are discovering that they themselves count—well they do not get on very well together. Of course, reaction leads to excess. We find all sorts of people going about nursing their idiosyncrasies, saying, "I am cultivating my individuality," and it seems to me now that you will suffer any man to be mad provided that he is mad in his own particular way. Those people who want a quiet life say this is disturbing, annoying, and "education is the curse of the country."

But, whether we like it or not, it is inevitable. Sooner or later we were bound to be educated, men were bound to find out they were men. It is no use calling this a curse because it is a fact of nature.

Just one fact has been left out in this debate. We have heard about the elementary schools, the Public schools. We have paraded ourselves as products of the Universities, but what about the host of voluntary workers and voluntary organizations throughout the country? Their educational work is very important. In spite of the discovery of individualism, I believe we are learning to accept each other, to settle down together in a society. Such voluntary workers as those connected with the Boy Scouts and similar organizations are helping to fill in the gaps of our educational system, are educating the people of this country, and teaching them to be men, yet how, as men, to "shake down" together, to be "social" as men and not as savages (cheers).

LADY ASTOR: I wonder whether you have enjoyed yourselves as much as I have. I even

wondered whether I was back in the House of Commons. I just look forward a few years, if I can manage to hold my seat, and I am sure I shall hear these speeches or some of them in the House of Commons.

It is not true that I mauled Sir Frederick Banbury. I tugged mildly at his coat tails. I only hope you women will learn to control yourselves before you get to the House of Commons, before you meet Mr. Smyth there. I thought Lord Hugh Cecil was our chief mediævalist, but here we have found its bright and shining star. I am most grateful to you for asking me to come here. These young men have shown me where politicians are made. It is in our Universities. There they are taught to talk glibly on any subject, and that is the menace of the country. What we need are men of character (loud laughter)—who cannot talk about a thing unless they are firmly convinced, and here we have had exposed to the public view brilliant young men, not believing a word they say and yet saying it with such witty fascination and charm that we dread the future state of democracy. I warn you. I have felt discouraged sometimes about democracy when I have sat and looked at some of the choices of the people, but what chance have the people got with men like these ? (loud cheers).

A NOTE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNION SOCIETY

When Lady Astor made her criticism at the end of the debate, she seemed so evidently to be speaking in friendly jest that the speakers accepted it and enjoyed her whimsicality as much as the audience.

Unfortunately, however, certain members of the Press took her remarks more seriously, and at least one leading article described her criticism as a "very sensible and necessary warning," concluding with the exhortation to "distrust fluency, learn to despise glibness. Then we shall get reality into politics, which is what our old Oxford and Cambridge ruling class is doing its best to avoid." This criticism has so far been ignored, but, now that Lady Astor's remarks are to be embodied in book form, we may be forgiven if we raise a gentle protest ere we be reported to posterity as six young men glibly and dangerously insincere. Further, it would be extremely unfortunate if our temerity in risking the limelight of London should lead to a false view of the work done by our twin societies, which, for over a century now, have generally been supposed to be of value, not only to the Universities, but to the country.

Lady Astor's chief complaint seems to be that the speakers were too witty, "charming and fascinating." Of course, wit is always suspect. But there seems to be a particular tendency to-day to believe that wit or any grace of diction means the sacrifice of honesty, that a speaker cannot be sincere unless he is either hesitant, abusive, incoherent or very dull. During recent elections the electorate has sometimes been advised to place its trust in "sound men of business," who are much too busy to pretend to talk, or in silent men of action who have never had the time to study English. Oratory is at a discount. Fluency, apparently, must be left to the Press, behind whom many of these strong silent men readily shelter. But there are signs that the re-action against oratory is coming to an end. No

proof is forthcoming that the strong silent men in politics are necessarily any more reliable than John Bright, William Ewart Gladstone or Lord Beaconsfield.

Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the primary object of University Union Societies is, not to produce politicians, but to further the exchange of ideas, and to give opportunity of cultivating the art of self-expression. Wit is one of the graces of this art. Sincerity is its basis. No audience is more critical of mere fluency or verbosity than a Union audience, and the practice of speaking to an audience so quick to detect paint and powder ought to make for sincerity. Perhaps if our critics will look again at these speeches they will see a shy earnestness struggling through the armour of jest and merriment.

Lady Astor herself is a notable exponent of the art of combining wit and sincerity. Hence, some of her audience did not understand her—any more than they understood us.

R. H. LAWSON SLATER.

27th August, 1923.

LECTURES AND COUNTER-LECTURES

(In aid of the Hospitals of London)

The series of discussions held at the London School of Economics in the Spring and Summer of last year, and republished in this volume, attracted such widespread attention that it is intended to arrange for another series in the early months of 1924.

Particulars will be forwarded in due course to anyone sending a post card to :

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